Mahavir Mahavidyalaya, Kolhapur (Autonomous)

Department of English,

Organizes

A One Day Multilingual Multidisciplinary National Seminar

On

Myths and Truths in Literature and Culture: Unveiling the Narratives and Decoding the Realities

साहित्य आणि संस्कृतीतील मिथक आणि सत्य: कथनांचे अनावरण आणि वास्तवांचा शोध

साहित्य व संस्कृति में मिथक एवं सत्य: यथार्थ का अन्वेशण और कथन की पुनर्व्याख्या

Monday, 16th February, 2026

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Best Wishes

It is a matter of great academic satisfaction to extend my best wishes to the Department of English, Mahavir Mahavidyalaya, Kolhapur (Autonomous), for organizing the *One Day Multilingual Multidisciplinary National Seminar on "Myths and Truths in Literature and Culture: Unveiling the Narratives and Decoding the Realities."*

Myth has historically functioned as a foundational mode of human expression—preserving collective memory, articulating cultural values, and mediating the relationship between the individual and society. Literary texts, across languages and civilizations, have continuously reinterpreted myth to interrogate historical realities, social structures, and evolving human concerns. In this context, the present seminar assumes significant academic relevance by proposing a critical engagement with myths not merely as inherited narratives, but as dynamic constructs that inform and reshape cultural truths.

The interdisciplinary and multilingual orientation of this seminar reflects a mature academic vision aligned with contemporary scholarship, where literature is examined in dialogue with history, philosophy, sociology, media, and indigenous knowledge systems. Such platforms encourage rigorous theoretical inquiry, comparative perspectives, and innovative methodological approaches—essential for advancing research and higher learning in the humanities.

I commend the organizing committee and faculty members for conceptualizing a theme that fosters critical discourse, scholarly exchange, and research-oriented engagement among academicians, researchers, and students. I am confident that the deliberations and research presentations will contribute meaningfully to the expanding body of knowledge in literary and cultural studies and inspire sustained academic inquiry.

I extend my best wishes for the successful conduct of the seminar and hope it becomes a catalyst for continued intellectual collaboration and academic excellence.

Adv. K. A. Kapse
Chairman
Shri Acharyaratna Deshbhooshan Shikshan
Prasarak Mandal, Kolhapur

From Principal's Desk

It gives me immense pleasure to convey my best wishes to **Mahavir Mahavidyalaya, Kolhapur (Autonomous),** and the **Department of English** for organizing the **One-Day National Conference on "Myths and Truths in Literature and Culture: Unveiling the Realities and Decoding the Narratives"** on **16th February 2026**. As the Principal of the organizing institution, I am proud and delighted to host this significant academic event.

With the implementation of **NEP 2020**, the emergence of **Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)** as a new academic discipline has opened meaningful pathways to rediscover and reinterpret our rich intellectual heritage. India's ancient wisdom, preserved in our **Vedas, Upanishads, epics, scriptures, and classical texts**, offers not merely philosophical insights but also a **practical and ethical framework for life**. These traditions, including myths and narratives, convey profound moral values, enduring truths, and thoughtful solutions to human challenges.

The theme of this conference is particularly relevant in today's fast-paced, technology-driven world, where the younger generation is increasingly distanced from the cultural and spiritual foundations of our civilization. By critically examining myths and narratives, this conference seeks to illuminate their deeper meanings and contemporary relevance, thereby reconnecting us with the timeless wisdom embedded in our cultural traditions.

I am confident that the scholarly deliberations during this conference will bring our ancient knowledge into the limelight and foster meaningful dialogue between tradition and modernity.

I sincerely compliment the **management, the organizing committee, and the faculty members of Mahavir Mahavidyalaya** for their dedication to academic excellence and human values. I also extend my best wishes to all **delegates and young researchers**, and I hope that this conference will inspire new ideas, fruitful collaborations, and innovative approaches in teaching, learning, and research.

Prof. (Dr) Advait Joshi
Principal,
Mahavir Mahavidyalaya, Kolhapur

Editorial….

It gives us immense pleasure to hand you over the treasure of knowledge in the form of this book. The book is nothing but an end creation peeped out from churning of the Mandar. It was an opportunity for all to be a part of a campaign for noble thoughts and you all in-cashed this opportunity being attentive partner of this campaign. The seminar is truly successful, as, if you read this book, you are astonished towards your spiritual quest for knowledge.

After selecting the title 'Myths and Truths in Literature and Culture: Unveiling the Narratives and Decoding the Realities' of our seminar, as soon as we publish it in the intellectuals' universe, the enthusiastic educationist began to attract towards it as we received numerous positive remarks through their frequent contact with us. The overall focus of our seminar is on 'Myths and Truths in Literature and Culture'. Almost all participants have written their research articles related to this theme. Some articles have tried to find out myths in stories and fictions. Some articles disclose the role played by Myths in strengthening the culture by connecting them with morality. Myths practiced in our culture and their pros and cons have also been discussed through some articles. Overall, our seminar is a thought-provoking sacred ritual and this book is its blessing.

In literature and culture Myths aren't just 'lies', they are symbolic framework to control the humanity rather boldly saying, indirectly they terrify us or in some cases they morally support us to be a good, kind, and moral human being. The gist of this book can be woven into the beautiful words reflected under the title 'The Weavers Thread':

"The ancient fable wears a factual gown,
While history hides its secrets in the lore,
We pull the golden threads of mythos down,
To drape the truths we dared not face before".

At last, we express our sincere gratitude towards the President Hon'ble Shri. Kallappanna Awade, Hon'ble Chairman Adv. Shri. K.A.Kapse, Hon'ble Vice-chairman Adv. Shri. Abhijeet Kapse, Hon'ble Secretary Shri. Mohan Gargate, Hon'ble Treasurer Shri. Gunwant Rote and all esteemed Director Body Members of Shri. Acharyaratna Deshbhooshan Shikshan Prasarak Mandal Kolhapur who always supported and inspired us to organize a national level seminar. We are also thankful to the Principal of our college Hon'ble Prof. (Dr) Advait Joshi, the Coordinator Prof. (Dr) Kalpana Gangatirkar, Organizing Secretary Mr. Hemant Patil, Treasurer Dr. Pradip Gaikwad and our colleagues Mrs. Rubina Mulla, Ms. Pradnya Siddheshwar, Mr. Amar Patil who took great efforts to make this seminar a grand success. We extend our gratitude towards the scholars, researchers and students who contributed their scholarly research articles in our seminar. At last, we express heartfelt thanks to our dedicated non-teaching staff for their tireless efforts to make this seminar happen. Thank you and best wishes to all.

Executive Editor,
Mr. Prakash Chavan,
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Myth, Reality and Indian Culture

Keynote Address

Shivakumar GV

Director - INDICA Kautilya Centre

When we use the word *myth*, we often imagine that we are naming a simple category of story. Yet the term carries centuries of philosophical argument, theological inheritance, and cultural judgment within it. What appears to be a neutral translation can quietly reorganize how an entire civilization is perceived. In the Indian context, narratives that communities have approached as memory, pedagogy, cosmology, and pathways of self-transformation are frequently relocated into a box marked fiction, imagination, or pre-rational belief.

It is necessary to slow this down and examine that movement of its meaning. By tracing the career of the word *myth* in English, and by placing it alongside indigenous categories such as *itihāsa*, *purāṇa*, *ākhyāna*, and *kathā*, we begin to see not merely different stories, but different theories of reality. What emerges is a richer understanding of how narrative has functioned as one of India's most enduring knowledge systems.

The origins of the word myth in the west

The word *myth* has travelled across languages, centuries, and intellectual climates, gathering new meanings as it moved. The story begins in ancient Greece with the term *mýthos* (μῦθος). In early usage, especially in Homer, the word did not suggest fiction or falsehood. It meant speech, narration, or a formal utterance - often something weighty and authoritative. A *mythos* was a telling that mattered.

As Greek thought developed, philosophers such as Plato began to distinguish between *mythos* and *logos*. While *logos* referred to rational argument or analytical explanation, *mythos* came to denote traditional narrative. Yet even in this contrast, myth was not dismissed as untrue. It could still communicate moral, metaphysical, or pedagogical insight in ways argument could not.

During the Hellenistic and late antique periods, myths increasingly referred to stories about gods, heroes, and cosmic origins. Intellectual traditions often interpreted them allegorically, seeing them as symbolic vessels of deeper truths. When the word entered Latin as *mythus*, it largely retained this sense of a culturally inherited sacred or heroic tale.

The passage into English, via French and Latin, occurred in the early modern period. Writers used *myth* mainly to describe narratives from Greek and Roman antiquity or from other "pagan" cultures. The word still did not automatically imply falsity, it marked a genre of story tied to religion and tradition.

A major shift occurred in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries under Enlightenment influence. As history and science became dominant authorities, myth was increasingly defined by what it was not ie., not factual, not rational, not verifiable. In popular understanding, it began to mean illusion, error, or superstition. To call something a myth was to debunk it.

Twentieth-century scholarship attempted to complicate this reduction. Anthropologists, historians of religion, psychologists, and structuralists argued that myths express collective values, encode social structures, and explore fundamental human questions. For them, myth did not mean lie, it meant a meaningful narrative framework that shapes how communities inhabit the world.

Today, these meanings coexist creating enormous confusion. In everyday speech, myth often signifies a misconception. In certain academic contexts, it can refer to symbolic truths, origin stories, or cultural memory depending on the discipline. In History, the word could assume derogatory and lowly meaning. The journey of the word thus reflects broader transformations in how societies understand truth, authority, and the power of storytelling.

The Indian Tradition

On the one hand, the modern English word *myth* carries a long and complicated intellectual history. On the other hand, when it is used to translate Indian narrative categories such as *itihāsa*, *purāṇa*, *ākhyāna*, or *kathā*, much more happens than a simple change of language. A shift in worldview takes place.

As already mentioned, in its Greek origins, *mythos* meant speech, narration, an authoritative telling. It did not automatically imply falsehood. Over centuries, particularly under the influence of Enlightenment rationalism, the word came to stand in contrast to history and science. In popular usage today, to call something a myth is often to call it untrue.

Indian categories evolved differently. *Itihāsa* literally means "thus indeed it was," and situates narrative as civilizational memory, ethical reflection, and transmission of dharma across generations. Its concern is not merely to document events but to orient life. *Purāṇa* weaves cosmology, genealogy, sacred geography, and moral imagination into a structured understanding of the world. *Ākhyānas* function as illustrative episodes, almost like embedded case studies, while *kathā* traditions may transform listeners through performance, devotion, or philosophical insight. These forms are classified by purpose and function, not by a binary of factual versus fictional.

The difficulty arises when the English term *myth* - now commonly heard as fantasy or superstition - is imposed as their equivalent. Many scholars working in Indian Knowledge Systems argue that such translation subtly delegitimizes living traditions. It relocates authority away from inherited practices toward modern historiography and encourages readers to approach these narratives as imaginative literature rather than as vehicles of knowledge.

This tendency deepened in the nineteenth century. Colonial philology, shaped by evolutionary ideas about progress from myth to reason to science, interpreted Indian materials as remnants of a pre-rational past. Educational institutions, legal reasoning, and public discourse absorbed this vocabulary, and it continues to shape common sense even today.

Thinkers such as S. N. Balagangadhara have therefore suggested that the real issue lies not in the traditions themselves but in the conceptual lenses used to describe them. Terms like religion, belief, scripture, and myth arose from specific European histories yet travel the world as if they were universal. When they are applied without reflection, they can produce a distorted picture of India as irrational.

Thus, what appears to be a simple word choice becomes a profound question about knowledge, translation, and intellectual self-understanding.

The Purpose and Perspective in Itihasa-Purana-Kaavya-Kathana

Indian narrative traditions often described as "myths" are better understood as layered reflections on reality. They speak simultaneously to the material world (*ādhibhautika*), the cosmic or divine order (*ādhidaivika*), and the interior life of consciousness (*ādhyātmika*). From the Upaniṣads through the *Itihāsas*, the *Purāṇas*, classical kāvya, and into the regional literatures of the eighteenth century, these layers remain intertwined, offering a civilizational grammar through which life is interpreted.

At the widest horizon stand the rhythms of **sṛṣṭi, sthiti, and laya** - creation, maintenance, and dissolution. The Upaniṣads speak in images: the universe emerging from Brahman like sparks from a fire, sustained in that source, and returning to it. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* dramatizes this cycle through divine agency, while temple and pilgrimage narratives embed it in landscape. At the *ādhibhautika* level, the world arises and perishes; at the *ādhidaivika*, deities preside over its order; at the *ādhyātmika*, these become metaphors for the arising and subsiding of experience within the self.

Time unfolds as **yuga**, vast epochs in which dharma waxes and wanes. The Mahābhārata situates human action within the turbulence of Kali, while later vernacular retellings - from Kambaṉ's *Rāmāvatāram* to Tulsidas' *Rāmcaritmānas* - reassure communities that divine intervention recurs whenever imbalance deepens. Cosmic time thus frames ethical urgency.

Within this universe, human striving is organized through **puruṣārtha** and **āśrama**. Narratives repeatedly ask how desire, prosperity, duty, and liberation may be held together. Rāma's exile, Yudhiṣṭhira's

dilemmas, or the householder-devotion of countless Purāṇic figures reveal that worldly life is not abandoned but disciplined. Regional bhakti literature extends this insight: saints such as Tukaram or Tyagaraja transform everyday labor into a path.

The regulating principle is **dharma**, often particularized as **svadharma**, yet widened toward **lokasaṅgraha**, the holding together of the world. Kṛṣṇa's teaching in the Gītā links personal action to cosmic stability. Kings in Purāṇic and courtly narratives rule not merely for power but to prevent social disintegration.

A key medium of this participation is **yajña**. In the Brāhmaṇas it structures ritual exchange between humans and gods; in the epics it becomes ethical self-offering; in later devotional works it is interiorized as song, remembrance, or service. The movement from outer fire to inner intention exemplifies how the three layers mirror each other.

Life is further bound by **ṛṇa**, the debts to gods, sages, and ancestors. Stories of lineage, pilgrimage, and learning portray repayment not as burden but as continuity. **Dāna** redistributes wealth and merit, whether in royal gifts described in kāvya or in the humble offerings praised in vernacular hymns.

Transformation requires **tapas**. From Viśvāmitra's austerities to the meditations of forest renouncers and the disciplines of later saints, heat becomes the energy that reshapes destiny. This links to **karma** and **punarjanma**: actions ripple across lifetimes, as seen in the many births of Jaya and Vijaya or in narrative explanations for present suffering. Yet the same framework opens toward **mokṣa**, freedom from compulsive return, envisioned in the Upaniṣadic realization of the self and celebrated in devotional surrender.

Guiding these journeys are **ṛṣis** and **munis**, archetypes of insight. They anchor revelation, interpret crisis, and transmit methods. Their presence affirms that knowledge is relational and embodied.

The human being, meanwhile, is mapped through images such as the **pañcakośa**, the sheaths from food-body to bliss. Myths externalize these layers in journeys through worlds and heavens, while contemplative texts internalize them. **Yoga** provides the discipline by which alignment occurs - whether in the Gītā's equanimity, Patañjali's concentration, or the ecstatic absorption of bhakti poets.

Even political thought is narrativized. The strategies of **caturopāya** - conciliation, gift, division, force - appear in epic diplomacy, classical drama, and assume the form of full books such as **pañcatantra** and **hitopadeśa**, through distinguished metaphors and imagery.

Across millennia, then, these stories weave cosmos, society, and self into a single fabric. They allow communities to inhabit floods, wars, love, loss, and aspiration without severing the visible from the invisible. What modern vocabulary calls myth becomes, in this light, a many-sided pedagogy of living reality.

The evolution of Indian Culture

Because these layered narratives circulated through recitation, ritual, performance, pilgrimage, commentary, and song, they did not remain confined to manuscripts or scholastic circles. They became habits of perception through which communities recognized reality itself. Annual festivals re-enacted cosmic rhythms of *sṛṣṭi*, *sthiti*, and *laya*, allowing agricultural, temple, and domestic calendars to mirror the movements of the universe. Life-cycle rites translated ideas of *āśrama*, *ṛṇa*, and continuity with ancestors into everyday obligation. Gift-giving, patronage of learning, and feeding practices echoed the ideal of *dāna*, making redistribution both sacred and social.

Models of *dharma* and *lokasaṅgraha* shaped political imagination. Kings were praised as upholders of order, but village assemblies, guilds, and monastic institutions also saw themselves as participants in maintaining the world. Narrative precedents offered languages of negotiation, justice, and restraint long before modern law codes.

The arts ensured memorability. Temple walls, dance repertoires, dramatic retellings, and musical traditions turned metaphysics into something visible, audible, and emotionally inhabitable. Through them, avatāra, tapas, karma, and yoga became repeatable experiences rather than abstractions.

Equally significant was the widening of spiritual access. Hearing of redemption, grace, or insight in Purāṇic and bhakti storytelling enabled ordinary listeners to interpret their own struggles within vast moral

horizons. Civilizational endurance thus rested less on centralized enforcement and more on a distributed narrative literacy: a shared capacity to perceive human action as simultaneously material, divine, and inward, binding society across region and century.

Contemporary narrative and way forward

In the modern period, narrative practice in India has neither disappeared nor remained unchanged. Print culture, colonial education, new reading publics, and the rise of the novel introduced forms shaped strongly by European realism. Attention shifted toward individual psychology, social mobility, material causation, and the credibility of the observable world. These developments enriched literary expression and enabled powerful critiques of injustice, hierarchy, and political domination. Yet they also narrowed the older simultaneity of levels through which experience had been interpreted.

Where earlier tellings allowed the material, cosmic, and interior to refract one another, modern narratives often grant explanatory authority primarily to the empirical. The invisible becomes metaphor, transcendence becomes sentiment, cosmology retreats into background culture. As a result, the grammar that once linked karma to destiny, sacrifice to reciprocity, or personal duty to world-maintenance can become difficult to articulate in contemporary idioms.

To recognize this shift is not to reject modern forms but to ask whether they are sufficient to carry the civilizational weight of Indian experience. Many writers, performers, and thinkers across languages are already experimenting with reactivating epic time, sacred geography, and layered personhood within modern genres. The task before us may therefore be one of recovery and renewal: not a return to the past, but a reopening of narrative space large enough to hold once again the ādhibhautika, ādhidaivika, and ādhyātmika together.

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Gender and Myth: Rewriting the Feminine in Classical and Contemporary Texts

A Comparative Reading of Greek and Indian Mythologies

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Abstract

Mythological narratives have long functioned as powerful cultural frameworks through which societies encode and transmit gendered norms, moral values, and hierarchies of power. Far from being neutral or timeless inheritances, myths operate as deeply gendered narrative systems that regulate femininity through archetypes of obedience, sacrifice, purity, and transgression. This paper undertakes a comparative feminist analysis of Greek and Indian mythologies to examine how classical narratives construct the feminine as a symbolic site of control, anxiety, and moral regulation. Drawing on feminist, psychoanalytic, and postcolonial theoretical perspectives, the study analyses key mythological figures such as Medusa and Penelope from Greek mythology, and Sita and Draupadi from the Indian epics Ramayana *and* Mahabharata*. These figures reveal recurring patterns of victim-blaming, idealisation of female suffering, and the disciplining of female agency across cultural contexts.*

The paper further examines contemporary feminist retellings, notably Margaret Atwood's The Penelopiad *and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's* The Palace of Illusions*, to demonstrate how rewriting myth functions as an ethical and political intervention in cultural memory. By restoring voice, interiority, and narrative authority to mythic women, these rewritings transform myth from an instrument of patriarchal authority into a dialogic and contested space. The paper argues that feminist myth-rewriting is not merely revisionist but constitutes a critical praxis that challenges inherited power structures, reimagines gendered subjectivity, and affirms myth as a living discourse open to resistance and reinterpretation across time and cultures.*

Key words: *gender, mythology, feminist rewriting, postcolonial feminism, myth reinterpretation*

1. Opening and Framing the Problem

Mythology has long served as a repository of cultural values, transmitting beliefs, norms, and ideologies across generations through narrative. However, as feminist scholarship has convincingly demonstrated, myths are not neutral inheritances but deeply gendered narrative systems that encode and perpetuate patriarchal assumptions about power, agency, and morality (Lefkowitz, 2007). Within these mythological frameworks, the feminine occupies a profoundly contested space—simultaneously idealized and feared, celebrated and controlled, elevated and constrained. The feminine in myth functions not merely as character or narrative device but operates as symbol, moral benchmark, and primary site of cultural anxiety and social control (Doniger, 1999).

This paper addresses a fundamental question that animates contemporary feminist mythology studies: What happens when women in myth begin to *speak* rather than be *spoken about*? This crucial shift—from object to subject, from passive symbol to active narrator, from being the story to telling the story—represents a profound disruption of mythological authority and patriarchal control. Through comparative analysis of Greek and Indian mythologies and their contemporary feminist rewritings, we explore how the emergence of the feminine voice transforms myth from an instrument of ideological domination into a contested site of resistance, reinterpretation, and radical reimagining (Atwood, 2005; Divakaruni, 2008).

The act of rewriting myth is far more than a literary exercise or creative experiment; it constitutes a political and ethical intervention in cultural memory. Feminist rewritings challenge the naturalized authority of canonical texts, expose the gendered violence embedded within foundational narratives, and dismantle the mechanisms through which patriarchal power has been legitimized and transmitted (Rich, 1979). As we transition from understanding myth as unquestionable authority—sacred, fixed, and beyond critique—to

recognizing it as a contested, malleable text open to radical revision, we open possibilities for counter-narratives that centre women's experiences, validate women's perspectives, and assert women's agency in the production of cultural meaning.

2. Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Myth

To understand how myths construct and constrain femininity, we must engage with multiple theoretical frameworks that illuminate different dimensions of gendered power. Rather than treating theory as abstraction disconnected from lived experience, we approach these perspectives as critical tools for excavating the ideological functions of mythological narratives and exposing the mechanisms through which gender inequality is naturalized and reproduced.

2.1 Feminist Mythology Studies

Feminist scholars have compellingly demonstrated that mythology functions as a patriarchal archive—a repository preserving and legitimizing male dominance through narrative repetition and symbolic reinforcement (Daly, 1978). Within this archive, female characters are systematically reduced to rigid binary archetypes that serve regulatory and disciplinary functions: the obedient wife who embodies virtue through submission, self-sacrifice, and silent suffering; and the dangerous woman whose autonomy, sexuality, or power threatens patriarchal order and must be contained, punished, or destroyed. These archetypal patterns establish boundaries for acceptable feminine behaviour while naturalizing women's subordination as cosmically ordained rather than socially constructed (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979). Penelope's patient waiting and Sita's unwavering devotion exemplify the idealized feminine rewarded for restraint, while Medusa's monstrous transformation and Draupadi's unavenged humiliation demonstrate the punishment awaiting transgressive women who claim agency or voice grievances.

2.2 Psychoanalytic Readings of Mythological Femininity

Psychoanalytic theory provides crucial insight into the unconscious dimensions of mythological narratives, particularly the ways female bodies become charged sites of simultaneous desire and fear, fascination and revulsion (Freud, 1913/1950). The feminine in myth frequently embodies what Julia Kristeva (1982) theorizes as the 'abject'—that which disturbs identity, system, and order; that which simultaneously attracts and repels; that which must be expelled to maintain symbolic boundaries yet can never be fully eliminated. Medusa's petrifying gaze exemplifies this psychosexual dynamic: her power to transform men into stone literalizes masculine castration anxiety, while the narrative's insistence on punishing her for being raped reveals the deep patriarchal investment in holding women responsible for male desire and male violence (Cixous, 1976). Similarly, the repeated trials and tests imposed upon Sita and Draupadi function psychologically to contain feminine sexuality and autonomy within socially sanctioned boundaries, transforming women's bodies into disciplinary sites where patriarchal order is established and maintained.

2.3 Postcolonial Feminist Approaches

Postcolonial feminist scholarship insists that gender in mythology cannot be understood in isolation from other interlocking systems of power, including caste, class, race, and colonial histories (Spivak, 1988). In Indian contexts particularly, mythological narratives have been strategically mobilized for nationalist projects, with feminine purity functioning as potent metaphor for cultural authenticity and national honour (Chakravarti, 1989). Sita's status as the ideal woman became especially charged during colonial encounters, as upper-caste male reformers invoked her unquestioning devotion to Rama to distinguish Hindu civilization from alleged Western decadence while simultaneously justifying women's continued domestic confinement and social subordination. Contemporary feminist rewritings must therefore navigate not only patriarchal traditions themselves but also the complex political deployments and nationalist appropriations to which these traditions have been subjected (Tharu & Lalita, 1991). The intersection of gender with caste and class hierarchies further complicates any univocal feminist reading, as upper-caste women's honour has historically depended upon the systematic degradation and exploitation of lower-caste women's bodies and labour.

3. Classical Greek Myth: The Feminine Between Power and Punishment

Greek mythology presents a complex and contradictory landscape of feminine representation, where women's power, beauty, and agency are simultaneously acknowledged and violently contained through divine intervention, narrative framing, and symbolic violence. Two paradigmatic case studies illuminate the structural logic governing feminine representation in classical Greek narrative tradition.

3.1 Medusa: From Priestess to Monster

The transformation of Medusa represents one of mythology's most striking and disturbing examples of victim-blaming encoded in sacred narrative. According to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8 CE/1986), Medusa was originally a beautiful priestess devoted to Athena who was sexually assaulted by Poseidon within the sacred precincts of Athena's temple. Rather than punishing the divine perpetrator or offering protection to the violated priestess, Athena transformed Medusa into a horrifying monster whose gaze turned men to stone—effectively punishing the victim for her violation while leaving the rapist god entirely unchallenged and unpunished (Warner, 1995). This narrative trajectory—sexual violence followed by divine punishment of the victim rather than the perpetrator—establishes a foundational pattern repeated throughout Greek mythology, naturalizing the cultural logic that holds women responsible for male sexual violence.

The psychoanalytic dimensions of Medusa's story reveal deeper layers of cultural anxiety about feminine power and sexuality. Freud (1922/1955) famously interpreted Medusa's severed head as a symbol of castration anxiety, with her writhing serpentine hair representing the terrifying spectacle of female genitalia from a phallocentric perspective. Yet feminist rereadings, most powerfully Hélène Cixous's (1976) revolutionary essay 'The Laugh of the Medusa,' radically reclaim her as an emblem of female power, rage, and resistance to patriarchal objectification. Cixous argues that rather than fearing Medusa's petrifying gaze, we must recognize it as a form of active resistance—a refusal to be passively looked at, objectified, and consumed by the male gaze. The contemporary feminist reappropriation of Medusa as survivor and symbol of justified rage rather than deserving monster fundamentally challenges the original myth's victim-blaming logic and opens space for alternative narratives of female power and resistance.

3.2 Penelope: Fidelity as Feminine Virtue

If Medusa represents the violent punishment awaiting transgressive femininity, Penelope embodies the rewards promised to feminine restraint, patience, and absolute fidelity. In Homer's *Odyssey* (8th century BCE/1996), Penelope waits twenty years for Odysseus's return from the Trojan War, using her weaving as both daily occupation and strategic delay against the numerous suitors demanding she remarry and relinquish control of the household. Traditional interpretations celebrate her fidelity, cleverness, and emotional endurance, presenting her as the moral anchor whose constancy enables and deserves her husband's eventual heroic return (Felson, 1994).

However, feminist readings expose the profound costs and constraints of this idealization. Penelope's virtue is defined entirely through silent labour, emotional endurance, and sexual fidelity; she possesses no autonomous desires, no independent narrative arc, no existence separate from her husband's journey and eventual return. Foley (1995) argues persuasively that while Penelope's celebrated cleverness demonstrates female intelligence, it operates entirely within strict patriarchal constraints—her wit is acceptable and praiseworthy only insofar as it serves masculine interests, preserves domestic order, and maintains sexual purity. The epic text grants her no interiority, no exploration of her own suffering, desires, ambivalences, or resentments. She exists as symbol rather than subject, the perfect wife whose perfection paradoxically requires the systematic erasure of her own subjectivity, complexity, and personhood.

The stark structural contrast between Medusa and Penelope illuminates Greek mythology's fundamental binary logic governing feminine representation: autonomous, powerful, or sexually violated women are rendered monstrous and must be destroyed; while submissive, patient, faithful women are idealized and preserved. Female power and agency are permissible only when completely channelled toward masculine ends and patriarchal reproduction; female sexuality registers as inherently dangerous unless rigidly contained within monogamous marriage and male control. This dualistic logic shapes countless Greek narratives—from Persephone's abduction and forced marriage to Hades, to Cassandra's curse of speaking

truth that will never be believed—establishing representational patterns that resonate across cultural and temporal boundaries.

4. Classical Indian Myth: The Feminine as Dharma and Suffering

Indian epic traditions present parallel yet culturally distinct configurations of femininity, where women's systematic suffering, testing, and sacrifice become the very foundation for moral order, cosmic balance, and social stability. The concept of *dharma*—righteous duty, cosmic law, moral obligation—plays a crucial ideological role in framing women's subordination, violence against women, and women's suffering as spiritual necessity and cosmic imperative rather than social construction or patriarchal domination.

4.1 Sita: Purity on Trial

Sita's characterization in Valmiki's *Ramayana* (circa 500 BCE-100 CE) epitomizes the ideal of feminine purity achieved through absolute obedience, self-abnegation, and unwavering devotion despite repeated injustice. After her abduction by the demon king Ravana—an act of violence for which she bears no responsibility—Sita must nevertheless prove her chastity and fidelity through *agnipariksha*, trial by fire, literally walking through flames to publicly demonstrate that she remained sexually pure during captivity (Richman, 1991). Despite passing this excruciating test, persistent public rumours and masculine anxiety about her purity lead Rama to exile his pregnant wife to the forest, where she raises their twin sons alone before eventually disappearing into the earth—a disappearance that functions simultaneously as divine rescue, ultimate protest, and final erasure from the narrative.

Feminist scholars have extensively critiqued Sita's treatment as paradigmatic of patriarchal control over women's bodies, sexuality, and agency (Tharu & Lalita, 1991). The fire ordeal transforms intimate violation into spectacular public performance, making Sita's body the contested site where masculine honour, dynastic legitimacy, and social order are negotiated, established, and policed. Chakravarti (1989) argues that Sita's purity functions as a comprehensive system of surveillance, with her virtue constantly subject to examination, testing, public scrutiny, and ultimate judgment by male authority. The narrative systematically denies Sita any legitimate anger, resistance, or autonomous response to injustice; her only available recourse is complete disappearance—a form of protest so absolute it removes her entirely from narrative, history, and representation.

The contemporary political deployments of Sita's image demonstrate how mythological femininity serves ongoing nationalist, communal, and fundamentalist agendas. During India's independence movement and subsequent Hindu nationalist mobilizations, Sita became a potent symbol of cultural purity requiring protection from external threats and internal corruption (Sarkar, 2001). This strategic appropriation illustrates how mythological women are constantly reimagined and instrumentalized to serve contemporary political projects, their suffering systematically reinterpreted as noble sacrifice and spiritual exemplar rather than as evidence of systemic injustice and gendered violence requiring transformation.

4.2 Draupadi: Rage Without Resolution

If Sita represents feminine suffering silently endured and ultimately rewarded through divine intervention and posthumous glorification, Draupadi embodies justified rage that nevertheless finds no adequate redress, justice, or resolution within patriarchal structures. In the *Mahabharata* (circa 400 BCE-400 CE), Draupadi's polyandrous marriage to the five Pandava brothers—a narrative arrangement fraught with tension, hierarchy, and competing claims—places her in a structurally vulnerable position. The epic's most traumatic scene occurs when her husband Yudhishthira gambles away his kingdom, his brothers, himself, and finally Draupadi in a rigged dice game, leading to her public disrobing in the royal court—an act of spectacular humiliation and sexual violence that only Krishna's miraculous intervention prevents from reaching its ultimate violation (Hiltebeitel, 1980).

Draupadi's response to this violence is remarkable within epic tradition: she demands justice, refuses to forget or forgive, and her unbound hair—left untied from the moment of her humiliation—becomes a powerful symbol of unavenged dishonour that propels the epic inexorably toward its catastrophic war. Yet as Dalmiya and Alcoff (1993) observe, even Draupadi's entirely justified rage and legitimate demands for accountability operate entirely within patriarchal constraints and limitations. She is repeatedly punished for

her assertiveness through humiliation and marginalization, and her honour can only be restored through massive male violence—the devastating Kurukshetra war that annihilates both families and leaves the world in ruins. The text never grants Draupadi full ethical agency or autonomous standing; she remains the bearer and symbol of collective masculine honour rather than a subject with independent moral claims and inherent dignity.

The intersection of gender with caste hierarchy further complicates and deepens Draupadi's characterization and contemporary feminist readings. As a high-caste woman, Draupadi's sexual purity and bodily integrity carry vastly different social meanings and protections than they would for lower-caste women, whose bodies have been systematically rendered available for upper-caste male sexual exploitation (Chakravarti, 1993). Contemporary Dalit feminist readings of the *Mahabharata* have powerfully exposed how upper-caste women's honour, protection, and glorification depend structurally upon the continued degradation, violation, and dehumanization of lower-caste women, revealing the profound hierarchies within feminine oppression that dominant feminist analyses frequently obscure or erase.

5. Comparative Analysis: Silence, Violence, and Moral Authority

When we place Greek and Indian mythologies in direct dialogue and comparative analysis, striking structural parallels emerge despite their distinct cultural contexts, religious frameworks, and philosophical traditions. Both mythological systems systematically construct femininity through interlocking narratives of violation, testing, punishment, and containment, establishing women's bodies as the primary sites where moral authority, social order, cosmic balance, and patriarchal power are simultaneously produced, negotiated, and violently policed.

Consider the profound structural similarities across cultural boundaries: Medusa is punished by divine transformation into a monster for being raped, just as Sita is tested through fire for being abducted—both narratives holding women responsible for male violence against them. Persephone's abduction and forced marriage to Hades finds disturbing parallel in Draupadi's public humiliation and the systemic denial of her bodily autonomy—both representing violations that women must endure while maintaining prescribed virtues and fulfilling assigned roles. In Greek mythology, women are systematically blamed for the disorder, chaos, and destruction their presence allegedly causes; in Indian epic tradition, women uphold *dharma* and legitimate cosmic order precisely through their suffering, endurance, and sacrifice. Despite fundamentally different religious cosmologies and philosophical frameworks, both traditions converge in making the female body the primary disciplinary site where meaning, morality, and patriarchal authority are established and maintained (Dimmitt & van Buitenen, 1978; Tyrrell, 1984).

These cross-cultural parallels suggest that patriarchal mythology operates according to consistent structural principles and ideological functions across vast cultural, linguistic, and temporal boundaries. The systematic punishment of female autonomy and agency; the relentless idealization of female suffering, silence, and self-sacrifice; and the persistent reduction of women to symbols, vessels, and repositories of masculine honour rather than complex subjects with inherent dignity—these patterns recur with striking consistency in mythological systems globally. This recognition proves crucial for contemporary feminist rewriting projects, which must not only challenge and transform specific narratives but fundamentally dismantle the underlying patriarchal logic, symbolic structures, and power relations that generate and sustain them across cultures and through time.

6. Contemporary Rewritings: Reclaiming the Feminine Voice

The past several decades have witnessed a remarkable proliferation of feminist retellings, rewritings, and radical reimaginings that fundamentally challenge mythological narratives by centering women's perspectives, validating women's experiences, and asserting women's narrative authority. These rewritings accomplish far more than simply adding feminine voices to existing patriarchal stories; they transform the very structure, meaning, and authority of mythological discourse itself.

6.1 Greek Retellings: Irony, Anger, and Narrative Self-Awareness

Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005) exemplifies the radical possibilities of feminist mythological revision. Atwood grants Penelope first-person narration from the afterlife, allowing her to

directly contest, critique, and expose Homer's authoritative epic account. This Penelope speaks with wit, bitterness, irony, and profound self-awareness; she is no longer the patient, silent symbol of wifely virtue but a complex subject with her own perspective, grievances, and critical consciousness. She interrogates the glory of Odysseus's adventures, exposes the violence concealed within heroic narrative tradition, and mourns the twelve hanged maid servants whose brutal deaths Homer mentions only in passing as a minor detail requiring no explanation or ethical reckoning (Howells, 2006).

What makes Atwood's retelling genuinely transformative is not simply that Penelope speaks, but *how* she speaks—with irony that systematically undercuts epic grandiosity and masculine heroism; with anger that refuses containment, resolution, or forgiveness; and with narrative self-awareness that exposes the constructedness of mythological authority and the violence of patriarchal representation. The text strategically alternates between Penelope's first-person account and a Greek chorus of the murdered maids, whose collective voice further disrupts the singular, authoritative narrative of classical epic. These formal and structural innovations transform myth from monologic patriarchal authority into dialogic contestation and multiply voiced critique.

Similarly, contemporary feminist reinterpretations of Medusa radically reclaim her as survivor, symbol of resistance, and embodiment of justified female rage rather than deserving monster or cautionary tale. Writers including Sylvia Plath and visual artists like Luciano Garbati have reimagined Medusa's story to centre her experience of violation, her resistance to objectification, and her refusal of victimhood. In Garbati's powerful sculpture 'Medusa with the Head of Perseus' (2008), the traditional iconography is completely reversed—Medusa stands victorious, powerful, and unashamed, holding her attacker's severed head. This visual and narrative inversion literalizes feminist rewriting's fundamental project: taking the tools, symbols, and structures of patriarchal narrative and turning them against their original oppressive purposes.

6.2 Indian Retellings: Interiority, Desire, and Ethical Questioning

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* (2008) undertakes a parallel feminist project for the *Mahabharata*, narrating the entire epic from Draupadi's first-person perspective. This fundamental shift in narrative voice and focalization transforms our understanding of events, relationships, and ethical stakes. Divakaruni's Draupadi possesses rich interior life—complex desires, bitter resentments, profound ambivalences, and genuine ethical struggles that the original epic reduces to plot function, symbolic meaning, or moral exemplar (Nair, 2011).

The novel explores Draupadi's nuanced feelings about her polyandrous marriage, her unspoken and forbidden love for Karna, her complex and conflicted relationship with Krishna, and her experience of the traumatic disrobing as embodied violation rather than abstract test of masculine honor. Most significantly, Divakaruni's Draupadi questions the moral framework of *dharma* itself, recognizing how this cosmic principle has been strategically deployed to justify her suffering, constrain her agency, and deny her legitimate claims for justice and recognition. The novel thus moves from psychological interiority to fundamental ethical critique, suggesting that genuinely rewriting myth requires radically reimagining the moral categories, value systems, and cosmic frameworks that structure and legitimate patriarchal power (Nanda, 2014).

Contemporary feminist retellings of Sita similarly grant her psychological complexity, spiritual doubt, legitimate anger, and ultimately the power of refusal. In various recent reimaginings, Sita chooses to enter the earth not as punishment, abandonment, or tragic ending but as deliberate assertion of agency—a principled refusal to continue performing impossible purity for a husband, society, and patriarchal system that will never trust, value, or protect her. These reinterpretations transform Sita's disappearance from passive erasure into active liberation, from tragic victimhood into powerful self-determination (Dharwadker, 2011).

6.3 The Politics and Stakes of Feminist Rewriting

These contemporary rewritings accomplish several crucial feminist interventions. First, they move female characters from static archetype and symbolic function to complex psychological subject with interiority, agency, and inherent worth. Second, they systematically expose the violence embedded in

canonical narratives, making visible what patriarchal tradition has naturalized, minimized, or rendered invisible. Third, they demonstrate compellingly that myths are not sacred, fixed truths but constructed narratives—products of specific historical, cultural, and ideological contexts—and therefore open to critique, contestation, and radical revision (Rich, 1979).

However, feminist mythological rewriting faces significant challenges, resistances, and dangers, particularly in contexts where mythology has been mobilized for nationalist, fundamentalist, and communal political projects. Writers who reimagine Sita or Draupadi with complexity, doubt, anger, or agency risk accusations of blasphemy, cultural betrayal, and attacks on religious sentiment. The very act of centering women's voices, experiences, and perspectives in sacred narratives can provoke violent backlash from those invested in preserving patriarchal interpretations as the only legitimate readings (Sarkar, 2001). This reality illustrates how gender cannot be separated from broader political struggles over cultural authority, religious identity, and the power to define and control collective memory and meaning.

7. Why Rewriting Myth Matters Today

The feminist project of rewriting mythology is not merely academic, literary, or theoretical but urgently political, pedagogical, and transformative. Myths continue to shape contemporary gender norms, expectations, and possibilities, providing powerful cultural scripts for understanding femininity, masculinity, sexuality, power, violence, and justice. When young people learn about Sita's purity or Penelope's patience without critical analysis, feminist contextualization, or alternative perspectives, they internalize patriarchal values as natural, inevitable, and beyond question rather than as constructed, contestable, and changeable (Sarkar, 2001).

Feminist retellings offer transformative counter-narratives that enable radically different imaginations of gender, power, and justice. By systematically exposing the violence in canonical myths, they denaturalize patriarchal authority and create space for ethical re-evaluation and moral reckoning. By centering women's voices, experiences, and perspectives, they model forms of agency, resistance, and solidarity that challenge inherited constraints and open new possibilities. By treating myths as living, revisable discourse rather than sacred, untouchable truth, they demonstrate that cultural memory, collective identity, and normative values can be transformed through critical engagement and creative reimagining (Rich, 1979).

Moreover, these mythological rewriting projects carry implications far beyond gender alone. They suggest that all forms of inherited cultural authority—including narratives legitimizing caste oppression, racial hierarchy, colonial violence, and economic exploitation—can be interrogated, contested, and fundamentally reimagined. If myths that have shaped entire civilizations for millennia can be rewritten to center previously marginalized voices and challenge foundational power relations, then no narrative of domination is natural, inevitable, or beyond transformation. Feminist mythology thus becomes a model and method for broader projects of social justice, decolonization, and liberatory transformation.

8. Conclusion

This comparative examination of Greek and Indian mythologies reveals both the persistence of patriarchal structures across cultural boundaries and the radical possibilities for feminist resistance through narrative revision and creative reimagining. Classical myths from both traditions systematically construct femininity through rigid binaries of virtue and danger, reducing complex women to symbolic functions serving masculine moral and political projects. Whether through Medusa's monstrous transformation, Sita's trials of impossible purity, Penelope's silent waiting, or Draupadi's unavenged humiliation, these narratives naturalize women's subordination as cosmic necessity, divine will, or moral imperative rather than as social construction requiring transformation.

Contemporary feminist rewritings fundamentally dismantle these oppressive structures by granting women narrative authority, psychological complexity, and ethical agency. When Penelope speaks back with irony and anger, when Draupadi narrates her own epic with desire and resentment, when Medusa is reimagined as survivor rather than monster deserving death, mythology transforms from an instrument of patriarchal authority into a contested site of dialogue, critique, and radical possibility. These rewritings

demonstrate that myths are not eternal truths but constructed narratives whose meanings can be fundamentally altered through creative intervention and critical engagement.

Yet we must recognize that rewriting myth constitutes not revisionism but resistance—an active, courageous refusal of inherited narratives that have justified women's oppression, violence against women, and women's systematic erasure for centuries and across cultures. The feminine voice in contemporary mythology does not simply add perspectives to existing patriarchal stories; it fundamentally challenges the authority through which those stories have been told, transmitted, naturalized, and weaponized. This transformation from monologic patriarchal authority to dialogic feminist possibility represents mythology's radical potential as a space where cultural imagination can be contested, negotiated, and reimagined toward more just, equitable, and liberatory futures.

We conclude with a provocation that must animate ongoing feminist engagement with mythology: If myths shape cultural imagination and continue to powerfully influence contemporary gender norms, expectations, and possibilities, who gets to rewrite them—and why does it matter now? The answer lies not in achieving singular, authoritative counter-narratives that simply replace old patriarchal myths with new feminist ones, but in proliferating multiple voices, diverse perspectives, and contested interpretations—creating a mythological landscape where women are recognized as subjects rather than symbols, agents rather than archetypes, and authors of their own narratives rather than objects of others' stories. The work of rewriting myth is never complete but constitutes an ongoing, collective practice of cultural critique, ethical reimagining, and transformative liberation.

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स्थलपुराणातील मिथके व सत्याचा शोध विशेष संदर्भ श्री केदार विजय ग्रंथातील चैत्र यात्रेचा प्रसंग व ज्योतिबा आणि यमाई यांचा नातेसंबंध

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भारतामध्ये अनेक तीर्थक्षेत्र आहेत ही सर्व तीर्थक्षेत्रे त्यांच्या त्यांच्या उपासकांच्या मनामध्ये एक अविचल स्थान निर्माण करून आहेत या सर्व भक्तांमध्ये तसेच उपासना संप्रदायात नव्याने येणाऱ्या भक्ताच्या मनामध्ये तीर्थक्षेत्रांबद्दल चे महात्म्य देवतांबद्दल चे महात्म्य दृढ करण्याचे काम स्थलपुराणे करत असतात.

श्रीक्षेत्र कोल्हापूर अर्थात करवीर हे एक पुराण प्रसिद्ध क्षेत्र आहे या क्षेत्रामध्ये अनेक देवी देवतांचे वास्तव्य आहे क्षेत्र स्वामीनी श्री महालक्ष्मी अर्थात अंबाबाई आणि वाडी रत्नागिरी वर असणारा श्री देव ज्योतिबा हे लक्षावधी घराण्याचे कुलदैवत आहेत या दोघांच्याही क्षेत्रांची माहिती सांगणारा मूळ ग्रंथ म्हणजे करवीर महात्म्य व केदार विजय असे म्हणता येईल पैकी करवीर महात्म्याची संस्कृत संहिता उपलब्ध असून केदार विषय मात्र ज्या केदारखंडावर आधारित आहे असे वर्णन ग्रंथांमध्ये केले आहे तो केदार खंड अद्याप पाहण्यात आलेला नाही करवीर महात्म्याच्या मूळ संस्कृत संहितेचे सुगम मराठी भाषांतर जे ओवीबद्ध आहे ते दाजी जोशी राव नावाच्या करवीर छत्रपतींच्या आश्रित कवीने सतराव्या शतकाच्या उत्तरार्धात केले आहे तर याच ग्रंथा नंतर काही वर्षात हरी गोपाळ अंगापूरकर या वाडी रत्नागिरीच्या रहिवासी असणाऱ्या कवीने श्री देव ज्योतिबाची अर्थात केदारनाथांची महती सांगणारा केदार विजय या 36 अध्याय ग्रंथाची रचना केली आहे याच कवीचा लक्ष्मी विजय नावाचा ग्रंथ करवीर निवासिनी श्री महालक्ष्मी अर्थात अंबाबाईच्या पराक्रमाची गाथा सांगतो या ग्रंथाला अठरा अध्याय आहेत लक्ष्मी विजय ग्रंथाची रचना व केदार विजय ग्रंथाची रचना एकाच वेळेला झाली असावी असा तर्क करता येतो कारण केदार विषयात अनेक ठिकाणी कथेचा विस्तार टाळण्यासाठी लक्ष्मी विजय ग्रंथाचा उल्लेख केलेला पाहायला मिळतो.

ज्या तीर्थक्षेत्रामध्ये आपण राहतो त्या तीर्थक्षेत्राचे गौरवीकरण करण्यासाठी या ग्रंथांची योजना असली तरी अनेकदा हे ग्रंथ काही तथ्य किंवा सत्य मिथकांच्या रूपात मांडतात आणि त्याचा शोध करणे हे बरेचदा कठीण होऊन जातं.

स्थलपुराणांमध्ये आढळणारी मिथक ही दोन प्रकारची असू शकतात.

एक दिसणाऱ्या प्रसंगावर किंवा वस्तुस्थितीवर रचलेली कथा किंवा प्रत्यक्ष घडलेली कथाच मितकांच्या रूपामध्ये मांडलेली आहे

पहिल्या प्रकाराने रचलेल्या मिथकाचे स्वरूप जर बघायचे असेल तर केदार विजय ग्रंथातल्या सव्वीसाव्या अध्यायामध्ये देवी यमाई अर्थात रेणुका आणि महर्षी जमदग्नी यांच्या पुनर्विलनाची कथा वर्णन केली आहे या कथेचा विशेष उल्लेख करण्याचे कारण असे की या कथा प्रसंगाचा अन्वयार्थ लावताना रामचंद्र चिंतामणी ढेरे यांच्यासारख्या दिग्गज अभ्यासकाची गफलत सुद्धा झाली आहे. असे खेदाने म्हणावे लागते आणि विशेष म्हणजे याच गोष्टीवर आधारित काही सिद्धांत त्यांनी लज्जा गौरी आनंदनायकी अशा त्यांच्या अनेक ग्रंथांमध्ये मांडलेले पाहायला मिळतात.

यासाठी त्यांनी लोकगीतांचा आधार दिला असला तरी हा कथा प्रसंग नेमका काय आहे हे समजावून घेणे गरजेचे आहे त्याचबरोबर लोकांच्या नजरेला दिसणारी वस्तुस्थिती काय हेही पाहणे गमतीशीर ठरतं.

दरवर्षी चैत्र महिन्यामध्ये हस्त नक्षत्रावर जे साधारणपणे पौर्णिमेच्या आदल्या दिवशी किंवा पौर्णिमे दिवशी असतं त्या दिवशी संध्याकाळच्या प्रहरी देव ज्योतिबाची पालखी मंदिराच्या उत्तरेला असणाऱ्या यमाई देवीच्या भेटीला जाते तिथे गेल्यानंतर देव ज्योतिबाची पालखी यमाई मंदिरासमोरच्या सदरी वरती थांबते आणि गाभाऱ्यामध्ये अक्षता म्हणून विवाह कृत्य पार पडते

सर्वसामान्य माणसाला इतकेच दिसते की देव ज्योतिबा त्या ठिकाणी आले आणि विवाहाचे कृत्य पार पडले त्यामुळेच लोकगीतांमध्ये असे मी थक प्रचलित झाले की स्वतःला बहिणी समान असणाऱ्या यमाई बरोबर विवाह करण्यासाठी देव लवाजम्यासह जातात.

हे मिथक लोकांच्या नजरेला प्रत्यक्ष दिसणाऱ्या वस्तू स्थितीवर आधारित आहे आजही चैत्र यात्रेला जाणाऱ्या लाखो भाविकांपैकी यमाई मंदिराच्या दारात उपस्थित असणाऱ्या भक्तांना एवढाच सोहळा दिसतो त्यामुळे लोक वर वर्णन केलेल्या लोकभावनेचे पुष्टीकरण करतात पण या सगळ्यातून गर्दीच्या नजरेतून सुटणारा महत्त्वाचा भाग म्हणजे देव ज्योतिबा जरी सद्रेवर बसले तरी त्यांच्या पालखीत असणारी कट्यार यमाईच्या गाभाऱ्यात नेली जाते आणि त्या कट्यारी बरोबर यमाईचा अर्थात रेणुकेचा विवाह सोहळा होतो.

आता लोक भावनेला तडा देणारे मिथक केदार विजय ग्रंथांमध्ये मांडले गेले आहे आणि ते बव्हंशी सत्याच्या जवळ जाणारे आहे.

हा सोहळा समजून घ्यायचा असेल तर देव ज्योतिबा आणि रेणुका जमदग्नीचा संबंध समजावून घेतला पाहिजे केदार विजय ग्रंथाच्या दुसऱ्या अध्यायामध्ये जमदग्नींच्या आज्ञेने परशुरामाने केलेल्या रेणुकेच्या शिरच्छेदाची कथा येते ही कथा विशेषत्वाने या ग्रंथात घेण्याचे कारण म्हणजे रेणुका शिरच्छेदानंतर तिला पुन्हा जिवंत करण्यापूर्वी परशुरामाने मागितलेल्या वरदानांमध्ये जमदग्नींनी क्रोधाचा त्याग करावा असे एक वरदान आहे हे वरदान ज्योतिबाच्या अवताराचे आणि एका विशेष नावाचे कारण आहे.

देव ज्योतिबा संपूर्ण महाराष्ट्र सह अगदी गोमांतकात सुद्धा रवळनाथ या नावाने प्रसिद्ध आहे या नावाची व्युत्पत्ती सांगताना केदार विजय ग्रंथाच्या चौथ्या अध्यायामध्ये असे वर्णन आलेले आहे की जमदग्नी ऋषींनी त्याग केलेल्या क्रोधाचा अर्धा हिस्सा परशुरामाने धारण केला . तोच परशुराम पुढे त्रिदेवात्मक एकत्र अवतार धारण करून ज्योती स्वरूप झाला व त्याने रवाग्नी धारण केला म्हणून त्याला रवळेश्वर नाव मिळाले (केदार विजय अध्याय ४ओवी५५) अशी कथा या ग्रंथामध्ये पाहायला मिळते याच रेणुका चरित्रात पुढे 27 व्या अध्यायाच्या निमित्ताने यात्रा प्रसंग सांगताना जमदग्नीच्या आज्ञेने रेणुकेचा अग्निप्रवेश सांगितला आहे त्याच वेळेला जमदग्नी आणि रेणुका दोघांनी ही रेणुका द्वापाराचे शेवटी रत्नासुरवध झाल्यानंतर सह्याद्री पर्वतावर भेटेल असे सांगितले आहे (केदार विजय अध्याय २७ ओवी४२-४९)

संदर्भाप्रमाणे ही सर्व कथा कृतयुगात घडली असे वर्णन ग्रंथांमध्ये केलेले आहे तर रत्नासुराचा वध हा द्वापाराच्या शेवटी झाल्याचे सांगितले आहे.

याच कथानकात त्रेतायुगामध्ये रामाला भेट देण्याचे कथन सुद्धा आलेले आहे.

यानंतर अकराव्या अध्याय मध्ये ओवी क्रमांक 31 पासून रेणुकेच्या यमाई अवताराची कथा आली आहे. जिथे औंधासुरा बरोबर युद्ध करताना नाथकेदारांनी ये माई अशी हाक मारल्यामुळे रेणुका यमाई रुपात प्रगट

झाल्याचे सांगितले आहे. मूळ नक्षत्रावर ती दैत्याचा वध केला म्हणून ती मूळ पिठावर राहिली असा उल्लेखही येथे मिळतो (अ.११ ओ.५९-६०) .

हा सर्व कथा भाग सांगण्याचे कारण इतकेच की नाथ केदार देवी रेणू केला मातृ स्वरूप मानतात त्यामुळे देव स्वत: विवाह करायला जाणे हे कथानक दृष्ट्या किंवा परंपरा दृष्ट्या सुद्धा अशक्य आहे.

परंतु लोक माणसाचा मूळ ग्रंथाचा अभ्यास नसल्याकारणाने तसेच यात्रेच्या गर्दीमध्ये सर्व विधी नजरेत येत नसल्याने अशा गोष्टी प्रचलित झाल्या की देव स्वतःच्या बहिणीबरोबर विवाहाचा मानस धरून जातात दुर्दैवाने अनेक अभ्यासकांनीण ग्रंथातले आधार आणि प्रत्यक्ष विधी यांच्याकडे दुर्लक्ष करून केवळ लोकगीतातील दोन ओव्यांवरती एक नवमीतक निर्माण केलं आणि त्याची पुष्टी देण्यासाठी अनेक पुरावे देखील दाखवले.

अर्थात ते सर्व पुरावे खोटे आहेत असे नाही परंतु जर ग्रंथातले उल्लेख आणि प्रत्यक्ष विधी यांची सांगड घातली तर अधिक सहज आणि सोपी अशी मिथकांची माळ उलगडते. जी कुठेही लोकमानसातील ज्योतिबाच्या आणि यमाईच्या प्रतिमेला तडा जाऊ देत नाही.

ढेरेंच्या म्हणण्याप्रमाणे जोत म्हणजे नांगर आणि रेणुका म्हणजे भूमी या गोष्टीपेक्षा ज्योत म्हणजे तेजाचे प्रतीक असा अर्थ धरला तर हे कथानक अधिक सुलभपणाने समोर येते.

निष्कर्ष लोककथा मधली मिथक ही अनेकदा समोर दिसणाऱ्या प्रसंगावर आधारित असतात परंतु त्या मिथकांच्या जोडीला स्थानिक बाबी विचारात घेतल्या तर मिथकांचा एक नवा अर्थ उलगडता येऊ शकतो.

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मिथकसंकल्पनाया: वैदिकवाङ्मयेन सह सम्बन्धाभाव: ।

डॉ. रेवा कुलकर्णी
सहयोगी प्राध्यापक
द. भै. फ. दयानंद कला व शास्त्र
महाविद्यालय सोलापूर, महाराष्ट्र

मिथकसंकल्पना पाश्चात्यविचारकाणाम् प्रिया संकल्पना दृश्यते। मिथक शब्दस्य मूलमालोचयामश्चेत् तत्र मुख्यत्वेन अनृतार्थ: भवति। मिथशब्द: मिथ्याशब्देन सह साधर्म्यं भजते। मिथ्याशब्दस्य व्याख्यानं तु एवं कृतम् - सत्यानृते मिथुनीकृत्य[1] यद्भवति तत् मिथ्या। इत्युक्ते तत्र सत्यांश: अपि भवति असत्यांश: अपि भवति। अस्मिन् शोधपत्रे पाश्चात्यानां वैदिकानां च संकल्पनयो: तौलनिकम् अध्ययनं कृत्वा तत्र मिथकसंकल्पनाया: वैदिकवाङ्मयेन सह सम्बन्धाभाव:, साम्याभाव: वा साध्यते।

मिथकविषयिणी पाश्चात्या संकल्पना -

"Myth" (मिथ) इति शब्द: प्राचीनग्रीकशब्दत: **'mȳthos' (मायथोस)** इत्यत: निर्मित:। अस्य अर्थ: "भाषणम्," "विचार:," "कथा," अथवा "दंतकथा" इति भवति। एका काचन पारंपरिका कथा भवति । तत्र प्राय: अलौकिकानां शक्तीनां समावेश: भवति। एता: कथा: नैसर्गिकघटनानां, सांस्कृतिकमान्यतानां इतिहासं स्पष्टीकर्तुं वा योजिता: भवन्ति।

मिथकसंबंधिता: महत्त्वपूर्णा: धारणा: -

- **उद्गम (Origin):** अयं शब्द: ग्रीक 'mȳthos', लॅटिन 'mythus' शब्दत: निर्मित: ।
- **व्याख्या (Definition):** एका पावना कथा भवति या जगद्विषयिणी भवति। अन्या धारणा मानवस्य उत्पत्तिविषयिणी भवति। मानवस्य उत्पत्ति: कथं जाता, केन वा जाता? इत्येतादृशानां प्रश्नानां विचारस्वरूपेण कथा: यत्र वर्तन्ते तेषां मिथक इति संज्ञा भवति।
- **वैशिष्ट्यम् (Characteristics):** अस्मिन् पौन:पुन्येन देवानां, नायकानाम्, अलौकिकानां घटनानां समावेश: भवति।
- **सामान्य: उपयोग: (Common Usage):** वर्तमाने काले अयं शब्द: प्राय: तादृशकथासंबंधे प्रयुज्यते यासु कथासु जनानां विश्वास: अस्ति, परंतु ता: कथा: न प्रत्यक्षघटिता:। अपि तु कपोलकल्पिता:।

आधुनिक-ऐतिहासिकदृष्ट्या एतासां कथानाम् उपयोग: केवलं काल्पनिकाय मनोरंजनाय न अपि तु सत्यं कथयितुं, सामाजिकीनां घटनानां स्पष्टीकरणाय वा भवति स्म।

साररूपेण इयं पाश्चात्या धारणा अस्ति मिथकस्य विषये। अनया एव धारणया तै: भारतीयानां वैदिकं वाङ्मयम् अपि पठितं, ग्रन्थेषु प्रतिपादितं, विशदीकृतं च। उदाहरणार्थं W.J. Wilkins महोदय: Hindu Mythology Vedic And Puranic[2] अस्मिन् ग्रन्थे मॅक्समूलरमहोदयस्य अनुकरणं कुर्वन् एवं लिखन्ति -

"Non-Christian Bibles are all developments in the wrong direction. They begin with some flashes of true light, and end in darkness."

इत्युक्ते ख्रिस्तीधर्मबाह्या: धर्मग्रंथा: विपरीतया दिशा उत्क्रांतिं सृष्टिनिर्माणं विकासं वा चितयन्ति। यद्यपि ते अल्पप्रमाणेन सत्यस्य प्रकाशं तन्वन्ति परं तेषाम् अन्त: अंध:कारे भवति इति आशय:।

अत्र स्पष्टतया बायबलग्रंथम् आदौ एव प्रमाणरूपेण सर्वोपरि मत्वा वैदिकग्रन्थानाम् अवलोकनं कृतम् इति स्पष्टं भवति। अत्र स्पष्ट: पक्षपात: दृश्यते। यतोहि प्राचीन-भारतीय वाक्यार्थविचारशास्त्रम् अनादृत्य एषा अवधारणा कृता। वेद - पुराण - इतिहास आदीनां एकवाक्यत्वं कृत्वा एव संस्कृत वाङ्मये तत्त्वनिर्णय: भवति। अनेकत्र पुराणेषु एवं वर्णनं स्पष्टतया

[1] **ब्रह्मसूत्र शांकरभाष्य- अध्यासभाष्य**

[2] https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.280527/page/n24/mode/1up

अस्ति यत् वेदा: पुराणानि इत्यादि विद्यास्थानानां सर्वत्र प्रचाराय विभज्य तेषां पाठ: भवति स्म । अतः एकं कञ्चन भागं आदाय तस्य एकाङ्परीशीलनस्य प्रवृत्तिः दृश्यते। समग्रताया: अभावः परिलक्ष्यते।

एतादृशी धारणा शुद्धा भवितुम् अर्हति वा? इति चिन्तनीय: विषय:। अनया दृष्ट्या पाश्चात्यै: विषमा: मिथ्यासदृशा: नैके विमर्शा: (Narratives) प्रसारिता: इति सुस्पष्टं भवति। स: विल्किन्समहोदय: अहं मॅक्समूलर इत्यस्य अनुकरणं करोमि इति प्रतिजानीते अपि। तेन मॅक्समूलर इत्यनेन अपि अनया धारणया एव वेदानां सम्पादनस्य भाषान्तरस्य अर्थनिर्णयस्य च कार्यं कृतम् इति सिद्ध्यति।

वेदविषयिणी पाश्चात्यधारणा -

पाश्चात्यै: वेदशब्दस्य अर्थ: अपि पूर्वदूषितबुद्ध्या वर्णित:। यथा तत्र एव अग्रे THE VEDAS इति प्रकरणे स: लिखति -

"these books were not written for centuries after they were originally composed, it signifies knowledge that was heard, or orally communicated. The Vedas are not the work of a single person, but, according to popular belief, were communicated to a number of Rishis or saints, who in their turn transmitted them to their disciples. "[3]

अस्य अयम् आशय: - एते ग्रंथा: मूलरचनाया: कतिपयानां शतकानाम् अनंतरं लिखितानि सन्ति। अत: वेद इत्युक्ते श्रवणरूपा मौखिकरूपा वा परंपरया उक्तं ज्ञानम्। वेदा: केनचित् एकेन कविना न रचिता:। अपि तु प्रचलितधारणानुसारं स: अनेकै: ऋषिभि: सत्प्रवृत्तै: वा यत् तेषां पुरत: प्रकटीजातं तत् तै: स्वशिष्येभ्य: कथितम्। महर्षिवर्यै: व्यासमहोदयै: तेषां संकलनं कृत्वा ग्रन्थ: निर्मित:। अत: ते संपादका: इति ते वदन्ति।

वेदविषयिणी वैदिकधारणा -

विल्किन्समहोदयस्य महान् कल्पनाविलास: अयम्। इदं भवति मिथ्या प्रतिपादनम्। महर्षिभि: व्यासमहोदयै: तेषां संकलनं कृत्वा ग्रन्थ: निर्मित: इत्यत्र किम् अस्ति प्रमाणभूतम्? वैदिकविद्वांस: रचनाविषये निश्चयवन्त: सन्ति। व्यासमहर्षिभि: पुराणानां रचना कृता वेदानाम् उपबृंहणाय। अत्र वेदानां संकलनस्य न कोपि सम्बन्ध:। किं सूक्तं कस्य वेदस्य इत्यत्र संशय: कदापि कुत्रापि नासीत्। एतेन ज्ञायते यत् पाश्चात्यै: तत्त्वान्वेषणं न कृतम् अपि तु बायबलपुस्तकस्य वेदे सादृश्यम् आरोप्य स्वकल्पिता अर्था: विपरीतार्था: वा पुस्तके मुद्रिता:। अस्मद्देशीयै: विद्यापीठेषु अधीतै: शिक्षितै: जनै: अपि तर्कबुद्धिम् अनुमानप्रमाणबुद्धिं त्यक्त्वा अनुगमनं कृतम्। तस्मात् एता: विमर्शा: सर्वत्र प्रसृता:।

अत्र 'विद् ज्ञाने' इत्यस्य विपरीत: अर्थ: प्रतिपादित:। यस्य ग्रन्थस्य शब्दा:, वाक्यानि च परमप्रमाणरूपेण महत्यां ज्ञानमूलिकायां, विज्ञानमूलिकायां, च चिन्तनपरम्परायां सहस्रावधिककालिकायाम् अनादिकालिकायां वा चिन्तनपरम्परायां स्वीकृतानि, ते ग्रन्था: कल्पनामात्ररूपा: इति ते वर्णयन्ति। अपरं च यद् वेदै: प्रतिपादितं तत् सर्वेषु कालेषु बुद्धिमद्भि: शास्त्रदृष्ट्या विज्ञानदृष्ट्या परिशीलितम्। तत्र मिथ्यावाद: तै: न प्राप्त:। विद्यमानकाले अपि प्रगतविज्ञानम् अपि वेदप्रतिपादितान् सिद्धान्तान् न खण्डयति अपि तु पुन: सत्यापयति एव। उदाहरणार्थं पृथ्वीविषये - भूगोलशब्द: प्रयुक्त:। पृथिव्या: परिमाणम्, आकार:, अन्तराले स्थिति:, सूर्यमालायां तस्या: स्थानं च इत्यादिकं सर्वम् अपि शास्त्रीयम् इति निष्कृष्टम्।

अपरं च वेदे यदुक्तं तस्य यथार्थज्ञानार्थं वेदाङ्गानि दर्शनशास्त्राणि च प्रवृत्तानि। पुराणानि अपि वेदार्थम् इतिहाससहाय्येन उपबृंहयन्ति।आगमा: अपि तानि अनुसरन्ति। केवलं संस्कृतपण्डिता: वेदं ज्ञानत्वेन परिगणन्ति इति न, अपि तु सर्वासु भारतीयभाषासु यद् शास्त्रीयं वाङ्मयं दृश्यते तदपि वेदान् अनुसरति।

वैदिकवाङ्मयस्य समग्रतया परिशीलनेन इदं ज्ञायते यत् 'ईश्वर' 'देवता' विषयकसिद्धान्ते अधिदैविकं ,अधिभौतिकं, अध्यात्मिकं च इति त्रिविधम् स्वरूपं शक्तीनां स्वीकृतम् । एवमेव सत्वरजस्तम-आदीनां गुणानामपि सप्रमाणं निरूपणं वर्तते । एतादृशानां सिद्धांतानां कल्पनामात्रम् इत्युल्लेखं कृत्वा रचितानां ग्रन्थानां प्रामाण्यं संदेहास्पदं कृत्वा बुद्धिभेदं साधयन्ति पाश्चात्यपण्डिता:।

[3] Hindu Mythology Vedic And Puranic Page No.xi

सम्प्रति आधुनिक विज्ञानेन सृष्टौ अनेका: शक्तय:, ऊर्जा: वा अङ्गीक्रियते यासां कार्यम् देवतात्वेन वर्णितै: तत्त्वै: समानं वर्तते। यथा प्रत्यक्षेण अग्नि: वायु: आदित्य: चन्द्रमा: च आदीनां देवतानां दृश्यते। तेन वेदोक्तं तत्त्वं पुन: सिद्धं भवति। यत् तत्त्वेन परिपूतं भवति तत् मिथकं भवितुं न अर्हति।

वेदविषयिणी शास्त्रधारणा -

अर्थशास्त्रे विद्यासमुद्देशके अध्याये विद्यासु अङ्गसहितानां वेदानां 'त्रयी' इत्यनेन समावेश: कृत:। इतिहासे पुराणग्रन्थानां रामायणमहाभारतग्रन्थानां च समावेश: कृत:। मनुस्मृतौ विद्यासु अपि एतदेव। काव्यशास्त्रेषु काव्यहेतु: इत्यत्र 'शक्तिर्निपुणतालोकशास्त्रकाव्याद्यवेक्षणात्' [4] इत्यनेन वेदस्य पुराणानां रामायणमहाभारतग्रन्थानां च अन्तर्भाव: कृत:। आयुर्वेदे अपि समानम् एव दृश्यते। चतुर्दशविद्यास्थानेषु वेदस्य पुराणानां रामायणमहाभारतग्रन्थानां च अन्तर्भाव: विद्यते। धनुर्वेद:, आयुर्वेद:, शिल्पवेद:, अर्थवेद:/शास्त्रं च उपवेदत्वेन गण्यन्ते। एवं सुव्यवस्थिता अध्ययनार्थम् अभ्यासक्रमरचना मिथ्यावादस्य भवितुं न अर्हति।

बायबलविषये एवंभूता रचना न दृश्यते। अत: तत्र मिथकशब्द: योजित: स्यात्। वेदविषये तु अयं शब्द: उपयोक्तुं न शक्यते।

वेदकालविषयिणी पाश्चात्यधारणा -

As early as Manu, the nominal author or compiler of a law book, probably not more than two or three centuries later than the Vedas, though some suppose it to have been no earlier than A.D. 500[5]

अस्य अयम् आशय:

मनुस्मृते: नाममात्र: लेखक: संकलक: वा मनु: आसीत्। तस्य काल: वेदोत्तरं प्राय: शतकद्वयानंतरं शतकत्रयानंतरं वा भवेत्। केषंचित् मतानुसारं इ.स. ५०० त: पूर्वं न भवेत्।

वेदकालविषयिणी वैदिकधारणा -

पश्यन्तु वैदिकधारणा: ज्ञात्वा विपरीतकरणीया: इति निश्चयं कृत्वैव वेदानाम् अध्ययनं कृतम् इत्यत्र सन्देह: नैव। वैदिके परं वेदा: ज्ञानरूपा:। कल्पात् कल्पान्तरेषु निरंतरं भवति। अत: सर्वदा विद्यते। वेदार्थ ज्ञानाय न केवलं वदांगानि अपितु मीमांसा आदि शास्त्राणां अपि अध्ययनम् प्राचलत।तत्र च वेदानां अपौरुषेयत्वम् , अनादित्वं , प्रवाहनित्यत्वं च[6] स्थापितम् अस्ति। एवमेव उत्तरमीमांसायामपि ।ईश्वररचितत्वं च अन्यै: दर्शनै: अङ्गीकृतम्। कल्पनाया: अवकाश: पौरुषेयवाक्ये भवितुम् अर्हति आशयपूर्वकत्वात्। शब्दार्थयो: नित्यसम्बन्धस्वीकारे रचनाया: अवकाश: एव न विद्यते। तत्रैव च पुराणानां आगमानां च प्रामाण्यं स्थापितम् वेदमूलकतया। तत्रापि तेषां प्रवाहनित्यत्वेन मिथ्यात्वं दूरीभवति।

उपसंहार: -

भारतीया: विद्वांस: जानन्ति कुत्र कल्पनया अविद्यमाना: कथा: रचिता: कुत्र च सत्यनिर्वचनं भवति । यथा पञ्चतन्त्रकथा: न सत्यकथा:। राजनितिसिद्धान्तान् ज्ञापयितुं रचिता: कथा:। इति सर्वप्रसिद्धम्।

मन्मते भारतीयज्ञानप्रणाल्या: अध्ययनस्य फलपाकत्वेन एतादृशीनां पाश्चात्यानुगामिनीनां दुरवधारणानां निरास: निश्चयेन भवेत् । इति शम्।

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[4] काव्यप्रकाश: **१.३**

[5] Hindu Mythology Vedic And Puranic Page No.4

[6] मीमांसासूत्र १.१.८

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Myths And Truths in Literature and Culture: Re-Imagining Narratives From North-East India

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Abstract

Myths have long functioned as the cultural memory of societies, preserving collective beliefs, values, and truths that transcend empirical history. In the context of North-East Indian literature and culture, myth operates not merely as folklore or legend but as a living narrative force that shapes identity, resistance, and worldview. This abstract explores the dynamic interplay between myth and truth in literary and cultural expressions emerging from the North-East, a region marked by ethnic plurality, oral traditions, and historical marginalisation.

North-East literature frequently re-appropriates indigenous myths to interrogate colonial histories, socio-political conflicts, ecological consciousness, and questions of belonging. What appears as "myth" often reveals deeper cultural truths—truths rooted in lived experience, collective trauma, and spiritual continuity. Through oral narratives, poetry, fiction, and performative traditions, writers and cultural practitioners blur the binary between myth and reality, challenging dominant historiographies and offering alternative epistemologies.

This study argues that myths in North-East literature are not escapist fantasies but critical tools that reclaim silenced voices and negotiate modernity without erasing tradition. By examining myth as a carrier of cultural truth rather than falsehood, the paper foregrounds the role of literature in preserving indigenous knowledge systems and redefining truth beyond Western rational frameworks. Ultimately, the paper positions North-East literature as a vital space where myth and truth converge to articulate cultural survival, resilience, and self-representation.

Keywords:

Myth, Truth, North-East Indian Literature, Culture, Oral Traditions, Indigenous Identity, Narrative Resistance

1. Introduction: Rethinking Myth and Truth from the Margins

Within dominant Enlightenment and colonial epistemologies, myth has long been positioned as the opposite of truth—an imaginative residue belonging to a pre-rational or "primitive" stage of human thought. Such a view, shaped by positivist history and Eurocentric rationalism, reduces myth to falsehood, illusion, or at best symbolic fiction, thereby stripping it of epistemic value (Barthes 109; Eliade 1). Colonial discourse further reinforced this hierarchy by treating indigenous myths as anthropological curiosities rather than as legitimate modes of knowledge. As a result, myth was systematically excluded from the domain of "serious" history and truth-making, particularly in colonised societies.

Nowhere is this marginalisation more evident than in the cultural and literary narratives of North-East India. Despite its immense ethnic, linguistic, and ecological diversity, the region has often been represented through external frameworks—first by colonial ethnography that sought to catalogue tribes and customs, and later by postcolonial state discourse that framed the region primarily through the lenses of insurgency, border anxiety, and national integration. Such narratives have frequently overlooked indigenous worldviews, oral traditions, and mythic consciousness, rendering local epistemologies invisible or obsolete. Internal political conflicts and prolonged militarisation have further complicated the region's relationship with official histories, producing silences that conventional historiography struggles to address.

This paper argues that in North-East Indian literature and culture, myth does not function as escapism or fantasy but as a powerful mode of truth-telling. Here, myth operates as cultural memory—preserving histories of displacement, resistance, ecological belonging, and spiritual continuity that remain absent from state-sanctioned archives. Rather than opposing reality, myth in these narratives offers alternative ways of

knowing the world, grounded in lived experience and collective memory. Truth, in this context, is not limited to empirical verification but is understood as relational, spiritual, communal, and ecological.

By defining myth as an epistemological framework and truth as a plural, culturally embedded concept, this study moves beyond conventional folklore approaches that treat indigenous narratives as static traditions. Instead, it reads myth as narrative resistance and indigenous theory—one that challenges dominant historiographies and reclaims silenced voices. In foregrounding myth as a carrier of cultural truth, the paper positions North-East Indian literature as a critical space where marginalized communities articulate identity, survival, and self-representation on their own terms (Smith 28–30).

2. Theoretical Framework: Myth, Truth, and Alternative Epistemologies

2.1 Myth beyond Falsehood

Within Western intellectual traditions shaped by Enlightenment rationalism, myth has often been dismissed as a pre-scientific mode of explanation, valuable only as allegory or fantasy. Such an understanding rests on rigid binaries—myth versus history, rational versus spiritual, primitive versus modern—that privilege empirical verification over symbolic meaning. However, scholars of myth have long challenged this reductionist view. Mircea Eliade, for instance, argues that myth communicates "sacred history," offering truths that are experiential rather than factual (5). Similarly, Carl Jung conceptualises myth as a manifestation of collective psychological structures, through which societies articulate shared anxieties, desires, and moral codes (89). In this sense, myth does not negate truth but operates as a symbolic language through which truth is culturally apprehended.

The persistence of myth in modern societies further destabilises the assumption that myth belongs solely to a primitive past. Roland Barthes demonstrates that modern cultures continuously produce myths—political, cultural, and ideological—that naturalise dominant values under the guise of common sense (121). This insight exposes the fallacy of treating myth as irrational while elevating history and rationality as neutral or objective. Such binaries obscure the fact that all knowledge systems are culturally mediated. For communities whose epistemologies are grounded in oral tradition and spirituality, myth becomes not an alternative to truth but its primary mode of expression.

2.2 Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Narrative Truth

Indigenous knowledge systems operate through plural and relational forms of truth that resist universalising frameworks. Truth, within these systems, emerges through oral memory, ritual practice, and ecological intimacy rather than through written documentation alone. Oral narratives transmit histories across generations, embedding ethical lessons, cosmological beliefs, and communal identities within storytelling practices. Ritual knowledge further reinforces these truths by transforming narrative into embodied experience, where belief is enacted rather than merely narrated.

In the context of North-East India, myths function as living knowledge archives that preserve cultural memory and philosophical insight. These narratives encode ethical frameworks that regulate relationships between humans, non-human entities, and the natural world. Far from being static traditions, such myths evolve in response to historical pressures, adapting to social change while retaining their epistemic core. Their ecological dimension is particularly significant, as many myths articulate a worldview in which land, forests, rivers, and ancestors exist within a shared moral universe. This challenges anthropocentric philosophies and anticipates contemporary ecological thought by framing environmental care as a moral responsibility rather than a utilitarian choice.

2.3 Myth as Counter-History

Myth also operates as a counter-historical force, particularly in postcolonial contexts where official histories are shaped by colonial archives and nation-state ideologies. Colonial historiography often dismissed indigenous narratives as unreliable, privileging written records while erasing oral memory. Postcolonial state narratives, in turn, have tended to homogenise regional histories in the service of national cohesion. Within such frameworks, experiences of displacement, militarisation, and cultural loss frequently remain unacknowledged.

Myth intervenes in these silences by preserving what official history excludes. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot observes, power operates in history through both the production and suppression of narratives (26). In North-East Indian literature, myth becomes a medium through which suppressed memories of trauma, resistance, and continuity are articulated. By refusing linear temporality and factual closure, myth records truths that exceed the limits of archival history. It allows communities to reclaim agency over their past and to assert modes of knowing that challenge colonial and statist monopolies over truth.

3. Oral Traditions and Living Myths in North-East Culture

3.1 Orality as Cultural Memory

In North-East India, orality functions as the primary mode through which cultural memory is preserved, transmitted, and renewed. Storytelling, songs, chants, and ritual performances are not supplementary to written history but constitute a parallel—and often more authoritative—archive of communal knowledge. These oral forms encode historical experiences, ethical values, and cosmological beliefs in narrative patterns that are accessible across generations. Unlike written records, which often privilege fixed meanings, oral traditions remain open to reinterpretation, allowing communities to respond creatively to social and political change.

Crucially, orality in the North-East is not a static inheritance but a dynamic cultural practice. Stories are reshaped with each retelling, absorbing contemporary concerns while retaining ancestral wisdom. As Jan Vansina observes, oral traditions are "documents of the present as much as of the past," reflecting the conditions under which they are performed (27). Songs and chants, especially those embedded in ritual contexts, blur the boundary between narrative and action, transforming myth into lived experience. Through performance, memory is embodied rather than merely recalled, ensuring that myth remains a living, adaptive force rather than a fossilised tradition.

3.2 Myth, Community, and Identity

Myths in North-East cultures play a foundational role in shaping community identity and collective self-understanding. Origin stories narrate not only how a community came into being but also why it exists in a particular place and how it relates to others—human and non-human alike. These narratives establish moral codes, defining acceptable conduct, social responsibilities, and the consequences of ethical transgression. In this sense, myth operates as an informal yet deeply internalised legal and moral system.

Such myths are central to sustaining ethnic identity in a region marked by cultural plurality and historical disruption. They offer a shared symbolic language through which communities affirm belonging, especially in contexts of migration, displacement, or political marginalisation. Intergenerational continuity is maintained through the transmission of these narratives, ensuring that cultural identity is not solely dependent on institutional recognition or written history. As Stuart Hall argues, identity is not fixed but continuously produced through memory, narrative, and representation (225). In the North-East, myth becomes one of the most powerful narrative resources through which this ongoing production of identity takes place.

3.3 Spiritual and Ecological Dimensions

A defining feature of North-East myths is their deep spiritual and ecological orientation. These narratives frequently articulate an intimate relationship between land, ancestors, and spirits, constructing a worldview in which the natural environment is imbued with moral and spiritual significance. Forests, rivers, hills, and animals are not passive resources but active participants in the community's cosmology. Ancestral spirits are often believed to inhabit specific landscapes, reinforcing a sense of responsibility toward the land as both a cultural and sacred inheritance.

This mythic consciousness fosters an ecological ethic that predates contemporary environmental discourse. Rather than viewing nature as an object to be exploited, myths emphasise coexistence, reciprocity, and restraint. Environmental degradation, within these narratives, is not merely a material loss but a spiritual rupture. Such perspectives challenge modern anthropocentric paradigms and resonate with current ecological thought that calls for relational and sustainable modes of living. By embedding environmental ethics within

myth, North-East cultures offer alternative frameworks for understanding human–nature relationships—frameworks rooted in care, continuity, and moral accountability (Basso 41).

4. Re-imagining Myths in North-East Indian Literature

4.1 Myth in Poetry: Memory, Loss, and Resistance

Poetry from North-East India frequently turns to myth as a language capable of articulating experiences that resist straightforward representation. Rather than invoking myth as nostalgic recovery of a lost past, poets rework indigenous cosmologies to confront contemporary realities of violence, displacement, and cultural erosion. Mythic figures, landscapes, and ancestral voices often surface in poems as fragments—interrupted, wounded, or unsettled—mirroring the historical ruptures experienced by communities in the region. Through this reconfiguration, myth becomes a medium for remembering what official histories refuse to acknowledge.

Poets fuse myth with political history by allowing ancestral time to collide with modern trauma. The past is not sealed off as a completed era but returns insistently into the present, challenging linear notions of progress. Myth enables poets to speak of militarisation, forced migration, and loss of land without reducing these experiences to mere reportage. As Cathy Caruth suggests, trauma demands a language that exceeds factual narration, one that can register both memory and belated understanding (7). Myth offers precisely such a language, allowing poets to express collective suffering while retaining cultural specificity.

Importantly, myth also functions as resistance. By invoking indigenous cosmologies, poets assert epistemologies that colonial and postcolonial structures have long marginalised. Myth becomes a site of cultural survival, preserving endangered ways of knowing while refusing assimilation into homogenising national narratives. In this poetic practice, remembering itself becomes a political act, and myth a vessel through which silenced histories are reclaimed.

4.2 Myth in Fiction: Alternative Histories and Worldviews

Fiction from the North-East further expands the possibilities of myth by integrating it into narrative structures that challenge realist conventions. Many writers blend social realism with mythic imagination, creating narrative worlds where spirits coexist with soldiers, ancestral voices interrupt bureaucratic time, and landscapes retain memory. This blending unsettles the authority of linear, factual history and opens up alternative ways of understanding the past.

Such narratives often question the reliability of official accounts of insurgency and border conflict. Rather than presenting these events through the lens of state discourse, fiction grounded in myth foregrounds everyday experiences of fear, uncertainty, and fractured belonging. Myth allows writers to narrate insurgency not as an abstract political phenomenon but as a lived reality that reshapes identity, memory, and community. Linear chronology gives way to layered temporalities, where the past repeatedly intrudes upon the present.

Border anxieties, too, are reimagined through mythic frameworks. Borders in these narratives are not fixed lines but unstable zones haunted by memory and movement. Myth helps articulate hybrid identities formed at the intersections of multiple cultures, languages, and histories. As Homi Bhabha argues, cultural identity emerges in the "in-between" spaces of negotiation rather than in fixed origins (2). Mythic storytelling captures this fluidity by refusing stable conclusions, allowing characters and communities to exist in states of becoming rather than arrival.

4.3 Myth and Narrative Form

Beyond theme and content, myth profoundly shapes the formal strategies of North-East Indian literature. Many texts adopt cyclical notions of time that reflect indigenous cosmologies, where history is understood as repetition, return, and renewal rather than linear progression. Events echo across generations, and ancestral experiences mirror contemporary struggles, creating narrative patterns that resist closure.

Non-linear storytelling further reinforces this mythic sensibility. Fragmented narratives, shifting perspectives, and multiple voices disrupt realist expectations and invite readers to engage with uncertainty. These formal choices reflect the fractured realities of communities shaped by displacement and conflict,

where coherence is constantly under threat. Myth, in this context, is not merely represented but enacted through narrative form.

The use of multiple voices—human and non-human, living and ancestral—also challenges Western humanist assumptions about authorship and agency. By granting narrative authority to spirits, landscapes, or collective voices, writers destabilise anthropocentric and individualistic models of storytelling. As Walter Benjamin notes, storytelling rooted in communal memory carries a different kind of truth than isolated information (87). In North-East Indian literature, form itself becomes mythic, embodying alternative epistemologies that resist dominant literary and historical conventions.

Through these poetic and fictional re-imaginings, myth emerges as a dynamic literary strategy—one that enables writers to confront political violence, negotiate identity, and reclaim cultural memory while simultaneously transforming narrative form. Rather than retreating into fantasy, myth in North-East Indian literature actively reshapes how truth, history, and experience are imagined and told.

5. Myth, Truth, and Cultural Resistance

5.1 Myth as Resistance to Cultural Erasure

In the context of North-East India, myth functions as a vital form of cultural resistance against processes of erasure produced by colonial legacies and contemporary forces of homogenisation. Dominant national narratives often seek to assimilate diverse cultural practices into a singular framework of identity, reducing indigenous cosmologies to folklore or superstition. Myth challenges this erasure by preserving alternative worldviews that refuse to be absorbed into uniform cultural models. By sustaining indigenous systems of meaning, myth resists both cultural simplification and historical amnesia.

Linguistic loss poses a particular threat to these knowledge systems, as language is the primary medium through which myth is transmitted. When languages disappear or are marginalised, entire cosmologies risk vanishing with them. Mythic narratives, however, adapt by migrating into new linguistic and literary forms without surrendering their epistemic core. This process allows for preservation without fossilisation. Rather than freezing tradition in an idealised past, myth remains flexible, absorbing contemporary realities while maintaining continuity with ancestral knowledge. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argues, cultural survival depends not on static preservation but on the capacity to reinterpret tradition under changing conditions (15).

5.2 Gender, Community, and Mythic Revisions

Myth also provides a space for internal critique within communities, particularly through gendered re-readings of traditional narratives. Contemporary writers and cultural practitioners often return to inherited myths not to reproduce them uncritically but to question their silences and exclusions. Women's voices, long marginalised in both oral and written traditions, increasingly reinterpret mythic figures to expose the patriarchal assumptions embedded within them. These revisions do not reject myth outright; instead, they transform it into a site of ethical negotiation.

By retelling myths from marginal perspectives, writers highlight the tension between collective memory and social hierarchy. Myth becomes a means of examining power relations within the community, revealing how tradition can both sustain and constrain. Such reinterpretations align with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's assertion that subaltern voices must negotiate existing cultural frameworks even as they seek to disrupt them (284). In this context, myth is not treated as sacred and immutable but as a living narrative open to critique and renewal. Its authority derives not from unquestioned repetition but from its capacity to respond ethically to evolving social realities.

5.3 Negotiating Modernity

A persistent assumption in dominant cultural discourse is that myth and modernity are mutually exclusive—that the persistence of myth signals resistance to progress or rational thought. North-East Indian literature decisively challenges this assumption by depicting worlds in which ancestral spirits coexist with smartphones, and ritual memory intersects with digital life. These narratives do not present modernity as a rupture from tradition but as a space of negotiation where multiple temporalities overlap.

By integrating myth into contemporary settings, writers demonstrate that tradition is not erased by modernity but reshaped through it. This coexistence destabilises linear models of development that equate progress with cultural loss. Instead, myth enables communities to navigate globalisation without surrendering epistemic autonomy. As Arjun Appadurai notes, cultural practices are continually reimagined in response to global flows rather than simply replaced by them (33).

In foregrounding myth as a mode of truth within modern contexts, North-East Indian literature resists narratives that frame indigenous cultures as anachronistic. Myth becomes a resource for survival—one that enables communities to adapt, critique, and endure. Through this negotiation, myth affirms its continued relevance as a living, resistant force capable of engaging the present without abandoning the past.

6. Myth, Ecology, and Sacred Landscapes

In North-East Indian cultures, myths are inseparable from the landscapes in which they emerge. Forests, rivers, and mountains are not merely physical settings but storied spaces imbued with memory, spirit, and ethical significance. Myths tied to these environments articulate a worldview in which land is not owned but inherited through responsibility. Such narratives encode environmental knowledge that has been sustained over generations, offering insights into sustainable coexistence long before the emergence of modern ecological discourse.

Forests frequently appear in myth as sacred zones inhabited by ancestral spirits or protective deities, functioning as moral boundaries rather than exploitable resources. Rivers are remembered not only as sources of sustenance but as living entities with agency, capable of blessing or retribution. Mountains, similarly, are imagined as ancestral witnesses, anchoring communities within a cosmological order that links human life to geological time. These mythic associations transform geography into sacred geography, where environmental care becomes an ethical obligation rather than a utilitarian choice. As Keith Basso observes, landscapes remembered through stories actively shape how communities understand themselves and their responsibilities to place (55).

Literature from the North-East records these ecological myths not as static folklore but as living systems of knowledge. Through poetry and prose, writers preserve indigenous environmental philosophies that foreground interdependence over dominance. Mythic narratives often warn against ecological imbalance, portraying environmental destruction as a rupture in spiritual and communal harmony. Such representations resist anthropocentric worldviews by insisting that human survival is inseparable from the well-being of the natural world. In this sense, myth functions as ecological truth—one that challenges modern assumptions about progress and development.

This ecological orientation gains particular urgency in the face of contemporary environmental crises. Deforestation, resource extraction, and infrastructural expansion have profoundly altered the landscapes of North-East India, threatening both ecological balance and cultural memory. Mythic narratives respond to these changes by reasserting older ethical frameworks that emphasise restraint, reciprocity, and care. Rather than opposing modern environmental science, these indigenous ethics complement it by grounding ecological responsibility in cultural practice and moral imagination. As Deborah Bird Rose argues, indigenous ecological knowledge is not merely descriptive but deeply ethical, shaping how humans relate to more-than-human worlds (13).

By foregrounding myth as a repository of environmental wisdom, North-East Indian literature challenges dominant developmental paradigms that prioritise economic growth over ecological sustainability. Myth does not romanticise nature as untouched wilderness but recognises it as a relational space shaped by ongoing interaction between humans, ancestors, and non-human life. In articulating human–nature kinship, these narratives reject models of domination and instead propose modes of coexistence rooted in accountability.

Through its engagement with sacred landscapes, myth offers alternative ecological imaginaries that are urgently relevant today. It reminds readers that environmental crises are not only scientific or political problems but ethical ones—requiring a rethinking of how humans position themselves within the natural

world. In this convergence of myth, ecology, and literature, North-East Indian narratives articulate a vision of environmental responsibility grounded in cultural memory and lived truth.

7. Conclusion: Where Myth and Truth Converge

This paper has argued that myth in North-East Indian literature and culture functions not as illusion or escapist fantasy but as a vital practice of truth-making. Against dominant epistemological frameworks that dismiss myth as pre-rational or ahistorical, North-East narratives reveal myth as a mode through which communities articulate lived experience, collective memory, and ethical responsibility. Far from opposing reality, myth becomes a language capable of expressing truths that exceed the limits of empirical history and linear narration.

The discussion has demonstrated how myth operates as counter-history, preserving memories of trauma, displacement, and resistance that remain absent from colonial and nation-state archives. Through oral traditions, poetry, and fiction, myth records what official historiography often silences, offering alternative temporalities and narrative forms that challenge authoritative versions of the past. By resisting closure and factual finality, myth allows history to remain open to reinterpretation and communal ownership.

The paper has also foregrounded myth as a repository of ecological knowledge. In North-East Indian cultures, sacred landscapes—forests, rivers, and mountains—are embedded within mythic frameworks that emphasise kinship between humans and the natural world. These narratives articulate environmental ethics rooted in care, restraint, and reciprocity rather than domination. In an era of accelerating ecological crisis, such mythic imaginaries offer valuable insights into sustainable ways of relating to place, reminding us that environmental responsibility is as much cultural and ethical as it is scientific.

Equally significant is myth's role in cultural survival. By continually adapting to changing social conditions, myth resists fossilisation while maintaining continuity with ancestral knowledge. It becomes a space for critique, negotiation, and renewal—particularly through gendered reinterpretations and engagements with modernity. The coexistence of myth and contemporary life in North-East literature challenges the assumption that tradition and progress are mutually exclusive, revealing instead a dynamic process of cultural becoming.

Taken together, these insights challenge Eurocentric definitions of truth that privilege written archives, rational empiricism, and linear history. By foregrounding indigenous epistemologies, this study repositions North-East Indian literature as a critical site of theoretical and cultural innovation within Indian and global literary studies. Ultimately, the paper calls for a methodological shift: myths must be read not as objects of distant analysis but as living narratives sustained by communities. To engage myth ethically and meaningfully, scholars must learn to read *with* communities rather than merely *about* them—recognising myth as an enduring convergence of truth, memory, and cultural life.

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Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita: Truth beyond Illusion

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The Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita*, traditionally believed to have been composed over five thousand years ago, continues to provoke critical inquiry regarding its relevance in the contemporary world. Two questions are frequently raised in this context:* Why should an ancient scripture be studied today? *and* What significance does it hold in a rapidly evolving techno-modern era? *In an age where information, knowledge, and technology become obsolete at an unprecedented pace, the study of an ancient text is often viewed as redundant or irrelevant.*

As a part of the Mahabharata*, the* Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita *is commonly perceived as mythical or imaginative, with characters considered extraordinary and far removed from the realities of ordinary human life. This perception leads to the assumption that the Gita has little applicability to contemporary existence and day-to-day human concerns. However, such assumptions themselves arise from illusion—an illusion that the Gita systematically seeks to dispel.*

Rather than being a mere philosophical treatise, the Gita presents a dynamic and deeply human dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna. This dialogue addresses universal and timeless human conflicts such as moral dilemma, fear, confusion, attachment, duty, and the search for meaning. These concerns are not confined to any particular era; they resonate as strongly in the modern technological age as they did in ancient times.

Numerous misconceptions continue to surround the Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita*. The present research paper attempts to decode the concepts of truth and human values, recognizing truth as the foundation upon which all human values rest—a truth that exists beyond illusion. By re-examining the Gita from this perspective, the study seeks to establish its enduring relevance and highlight its potential to guide human conduct, ethical decision-making, and inner stability even in today's fast-paced, technology-driven world.*

Key Words: Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita, Illusion (Māyā), Truth, Human Values, Interpretation

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Two questions raised in the abstract of this paper—concerning the antiquity of the *Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita* and its perceived out datedness and irrelevance to the contemporary era—are rooted in illusion rather than informed understanding. Such questions are often raised by individuals, including scholars and so-called social reformers, who have neither engaged deeply with the text nor reflected upon its inner meaning through sustained study and contemplation.

The *Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita* is neither merely a religious scripture nor solely a philosophical treatise. Rather, it is a text grounded in truth—one that embodies, carries, and communicates truth. Through each of its verses, the Gita seeks to unveil the truth that lies both within the human consciousness and beyond empirical reality. Although the narrative employs historical characters and a specific temporal setting, the essence of the Gita transcends time. In this sense, it cannot be confined to the category of an "ancient" book, for the truths it expounds remain ever-present and eternally relevant.

This raises a crucial question for the present age: *Why is the study of the Gita a necessity of our time?* Addressing this concern, Sri Aurobindo, in his seminal work *Essays on the Gita*, offers profound insights that illuminate the Gina's universal and timeless significance.

> *We do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons of the future. A mass of new material is flowing into us; we have to assimilate theistic religions of India and of the*

world and a recovered sense of Buddhism, but to take full account of the potent though limited revelations of modern knowledge and seeking; and, beyond that, the remote and dateless past which seemed to be dead is returning upon us with an effulgence of many luminous secrets long lost to the consciousness of mankind but now breaking out again from behind the veil… We approach it for help and light, and our aim must be to distinguish it's essential and living message, that in it on which humanity has to seize for its perfection and highest spiritual welfare (Aurobindo 10-11).

Sri Aurobindo clearly emphasizes that although we do not belong to the past, we are responsible for shaping the future—a future continuously informed and enriched by the contributions of saints, philosophers, and social thinkers. Every text, though originating in the past, contains within it directions for the future of humanity. Such works carry profound insights and latent truths that have often been consciously or unconsciously neglected. These truths, however, continue to shine, as Sri Aurobindo aptly describes, *"with effulgence."* It is therefore imperative to decode their messages in order to unveil the truth they embody.

Despite its enduring wisdom, the *Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita* has been deliberately overlooked or misunderstood. Its relevance becomes particularly evident in the present age, where illusion is frequently mistaken for truth, truth remains obscured, and authentic values are marginalized. The Gita addresses this very condition of human existence. It is a text fundamentally concerned with the making of a complete human being—one who understands how to confront the sufferings and wounds of life, and who is aware of their *Dharma*.

In the Gita, *Dharma* does not signify rigid religious affiliation or blind adherence to tradition; rather, it denotes duty—right action performed with awareness, responsibility, and ethical consciousness. The text elucidates not only what one's duty is, but also how it is to be performed. In doing so, it reveals multiple layers of truth that collectively embody essential human values. According to the Gita, the acceptance of truth is the foundation of genuine happiness and inner peace.

Lord Shrikrishna	**574**
Arjun	**85**
Sanjay	**40**
Dhutrashtra	**01**
Total	**700**

The *Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita* is a profound repository of teachings that decode truth and guide the human mind toward lasting happiness and inner peace. Through its wisdom, the restless flow of thoughts gradually subsides, and the mind attains a state of stillness—comparable to a tranquil lake free from ripples. In this state of clarity, human consciousness becomes receptive to truth.

Through the Gita, Lord Krishna imparts the message of *Dharma*—understood as righteous duty—which unveils the deeper dimensions of truth, wisdom, peace, and bliss. The realization of *Dharma* harmonizes inner life with outer action, enabling the individual to live with balance, purpose, and ethical awareness.

These profound insights have been lucidly and sensitively articulated by Jagatguru Shri Tukaram Maharaj, whose devotional poetry echoes the essential spirit of the Gita and translates its philosophical depth into lived human experience.

आनंदाचे डोही आनंद तरंग | आनंदची अंग आनंदाचे || धृ ||
काय सांगो जालें काहींचीयाबाही |पुढें चाली नाहीं आवडीने || १
गर्भाचे आवडी मातेचा डोहळा | भेटीचा जिव्हाळा तेथें बिंबे || ३
तुका म्हणे तैसा ओतलासे ठसा | अनुभव सरिसा मुखा आला || ४

(तुकाराम गाथा -)

The process of decoding moral duty, true knowledge, and the principle of equality begins with this declaration of Arjuna:

> *It would be better for my welfare if the sons of Dhritarashtra, weapons in hand, were to kill me in battle while I remain unarmed and unresisting (Gita- 1- 46).*

He goes on to state:

> *If You consider **intelligence (knowledge)** to be superior to **action**, O Janardana, then why do You urge me to engage in this terrible action, O Keshava?" (Gita-3-1)*

It becomes evident that Arjuna is overcome by temptation and, under its influence, seeks to withdraw from the battlefield. In this state of inner conflict, he momentarily forgets his duty as a warrior—to confront and destroy forces that symbolize injustice, dishonesty, and moral corruption. His hesitation reflects a deeper human struggle between emotional attachment and righteous action. A similar reflection on inner conflict and moral resolve can be found in Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883), where he observes:

You say it is a good cause that hallows even war?
I say unto you: it is the good war that hallows any cause. (Nietzsche -10)

Arjuna is driven by emotion and momentarily loses sight of the law of nature. In this state, he ceases to act in accordance with his inherent *dharma*. His hesitation reflects a withdrawal from the natural order that demands responsible and decisive action. In this context, Arjuna appears to forget what Friedrich Nietzsche suggests—that it is struggle, or "good war," which refines reason and strengthens the will. According to the Gita, the law of nature requires one to follow one's *dharma* selflessly, without attachment to the fruits of action. Duty is to be performed not for personal gain, but as an offering to the divine and for the welfare of society. The work assigned to an individual by nature must be carried out with moral clarity, inner neutrality, and a sense of responsibility. Such action, free from desire and fear, leads to inner harmony and alignment with truth.

> *Treat happiness and sadness, profit and loss, victory and defeat with equipoise and fight for justice. You will not be tainted with sin (Gita- 2-38).*

This state represents true equality. Desirelessness, right knowledge, equality, impersonality, inner self-sustained peace, freedom, dedication, and bliss constitute the essential principles governing the performance of duty. These values form the ethical and spiritual foundation of action as envisioned in the *Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita*, where duty is not merely an external obligation but an inward discipline aligned with truth.

> *O Dhananjaya! Performing duties with the expectation of the outcome is very inferior to the task of attaining divine spiritual knowledge. Wretched are those whose motive is the fruit of the action. Focus your mind on spiritual knowledge. (2.49)*

Both verses emphasize the principle of inner equality in life, a quality essential for remaining undisturbed in all circumstances. Such equality enables an individual to remain calm, composed, patient, and resilient—accepting life neutrally as it unfolds. Life itself is a continuous battlefield, a complex blend of joy and sorrow, victory and defeat, fulfillment and frustration. To live wisely is to accept life in its totality.

This acceptance constitutes true knowledge, which ultimately leads to self-knowledge. Freedom from desire, expectation, and bondage is central to this realization. The *Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita* urges the individual not to become entangled in the three *gunas* of human nature—*tamas*, *rajas*, and *sattva*—but to transcend them. When one remains balanced amid these *gunas*, one attains happiness and peace; from happiness and peace arises freedom—not external freedom, but inner freedom. Outwardly, a person remains engaged in work, struggle, responsibility, and the challenges of life. Inwardly, however, one must cultivate stillness and serenity. This inner composure, the Gita asserts, is real happiness. It does not emerge from the renunciation of action or duty, but from the conscious acceptance and righteous performance of duty. Such action leads not to salvation after death, but to liberation in this very life—transforming earthly existence into a state of inner fulfillment. Heaven and hell, according to the Gita, are not distant realms; they reside within the human mind. It is one's perception, thoughts, and attitude that shape life as either heaven or hell.

The Gita thus teaches the acceptance of truth and emphasizes mental and spiritual well-being over mere material satisfaction. This involves sacrifice—not a physical sacrifice, but a mental one: the renunciation of ego, attachment, and desire. The ideal individual remains detached, bearing all experiences with equanimity—like a lotus that remains untouched by the mud from which it grows. Life encompasses birth and death, happiness and suffering, success and failure. One must not be governed by emotion or the fluctuations of the *gunas*, but by discerning intelligence rooted in neutrality and wisdom. Such balanced intelligence alone leads to lasting peace, freedom, and bliss.

> *One, whose mind is not depressed by distress or elated by happiness and who is devoid of desires or anger, or fear, is known as steadfast in consciousness. (2.56)*

Sri Aurobindo aptly observes:

> *All desires have to enter into the soul, as waters into the sea, and yet it has to remain immovable, filled but not disturbed: so in the end all desires can be abandoned. To be freed from wrath and passion and fear and attraction is repeatedly stressed as a necessary condition of the liberated status, and for this, we must learn to bear their shocks, which cannot be done without exposing ourselves to their causes. He, who can bear here in the body the velocity of wrath and desire, is the Yogin, the happy man. Titiksha, the will and power to endure, is the means. (Aurobindo 196)*

This understanding represents the true essence of non-violence as preached by Bhagavan Mahavir. It is this inner discipline and ethical awareness that constitute one's true religion. The *Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita* encourages the acceptance of such universal principles, while simultaneously challenging and dismantling rigid, superficial, or inherited notions of religion. It redefines renunciation by emphasizing inner transformation rather than external withdrawal. According to the Gita, a *sanyasi* is one who performs his *dharma* in this spirit of selflessness, detachment, and moral clarity. Such a person alone is a true renunciate. Those who abandon the struggles and responsibilities of life cannot be regarded as *sanyasis*. True renunciation lies not in escaping life's battles, but in engaging with them in a spirit of inner freedom. The Gita also presents a profound and expansive concept of God. God is not confined to idols or temples alone; the Divine is omnipresent—dwelling in every heart and manifesting throughout nature, from the smallest ant to the mightiest elephant. This vision affirms the unity of existence and the sacredness of all life.

> *O Son of Kunti! I am the sweetness in water. I am the radiance in the Sun and the Moon. I am the primordial syllable Om in the Vedas. I am the sound in space. I am virility in humans. (7.8)*
> *I am the fragrance on earth. I am the brilliance in fire. I am the life in living beings. I am the austerity in ascetics. (7.9)*
>
> *Know that I am the eternal seed and the root cause for the existence of all beings. Intelligence in the intelligent is due to Me. Strength in the powerful is due to Me (The Lord is the root cause not only of all beings but also of their strength and qualities). (7.10)*
> *I am one of the strong people who are devoid of passions such as lust, anger, and attachment. I am the desire in beings not contradicting dharma or virtue. (7.11)*

These verses collectively elucidate the existence of God in multiple dimensions and unveil the true nature of the Almighty. The *Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita* does not emphasize ritualistic practices as the path to realization; rather, it advocates dedication to *karma* (action), devotion to God, and the pursuit of self-knowledge. Through the integration of these paths, and by ultimately transcending attachment to them, the Gita presents the way toward truth. Central to the Gina's teaching is the principle of detachment, which it identifies as the genuine source of joy and lasting happiness. Detachment liberates the individual from bondage without negating responsibility or action. In this context, Sri Aurobindo offers a profound interpretation, observing:

> *That equality, impersonality, peace, joy, and freedom do not depend on so outward a thing as doing or not doing works. The Gita insists repeatedly on the difference between the inward and*

outward renunciation, tyaga and sannyasa. The latter, it says, is valueless without the former, hardly possible even to attain without it, and unnecessary when there is the inward freedom. In fact, tyaga itself is the real and sufficient Sannyasa (Aurobindo- 185)

Lord Buddha also conveyed teachings aligned with these principles, particularly emphasizing desirelessness as the foundation of liberation. His teachings, however, have often been misunderstood or misrepresented. As Sadhguru observes, *"[Buddha's teachings] have unfortunately been misinterpreted and mutilated by many… What he was pointing to was the importance of operating out of a state of inner fulfillment rather than inner hankering. Once this is accomplished, your life becomes an expression of bliss, not a pursuit of it"* (Sadhguru, 31).

Conclusion

The *Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita*, in essence, decodes truth in every verse—a truth that exists beyond human illusion. To truly understand the Gita, one must engage in deep reflection and mindful awareness of one's actions. It urges individuals to examine how they act: whether actions are performed mechanically or with conscious awareness. This requires a clear understanding of *karma*—what constitutes action, how it should be performed, and what makes it righteous and transformative. The Gita emphasizes *karma* imbued with multiple layers of truth: selflessness, detachment, moral responsibility, and spiritual awareness. Such action, rooted in consciousness rather than desire, leads to inner freedom, peace, and fulfillment. In this way, the Gita remains profoundly relevant, offering timeless guidance for ethical living and self-realization in every age.

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Eternal Burden and Moral Longing: A Comparative Study of Aging and the Illusion of Immortality in Tennyson's *Tithonus* and V.S. Khanderkar's *Yayati*

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Abstract

The paper explores the treatment of old age and immortality in V.S. Khandekar's Yayati (based on Mahabharata) and Alfred Lord Tennyson's Tithonus (Greek Myth). Both the texts illustrate a profound, philosophical inquiry into the paradoxical curse of immortality without eternal youth. Both the texts comments on unending desires, the natural order and the tragic consequences of transgressing moral limits which ultimately lead to existential despair.

***Key words**: Mythology, existential, immortality, morality.*

Myth is a symbolic traditional narrative that relates actual event often associated with religious beliefs. Myths represent Gods, supernatural characters and incidents. The word 'myth' comes from the Greek *mythos* which means 'word' or 'story.' Myths are present in every society and appear to be a basic part of human culture and provide heroic values. The term *mythology* denotes both the study of myth and the body of the myth belonging to particular culture or tradition. Myths remain relevant even today by providing universal frameworks for understanding life, culture and human psyche. They are cultural maps. They influence art, literature and modern media showing timeless truths about human nature.

The new Gresham Encyclopaedia defines myth as:

> "The word myth originally simply meant speech, then in a narrower sense, a tale or tradition, particularly one handed down from prehistoric times giving, in the form of a story about a God or a hero, some ancient belief regarding the process of Nature, customs or problems of cosmogony." (53).

Past is culturally valuable to lead present. Both Indian mythology and Greek mythology are rich and strikingly have some similarities. The ancient Indian myth of king Yayati and the Greek myth of Tithonus, through culturally disparate present strikingly parallel narratives related to the theme of immortality and youth. Both the works share the same theme of the curse and undesired immortality, the horror of perpetual decay and ultimate recognition of mortality as a necessary condition of meaningful life.

Tithonus is regarded as one of Tennyson's most important works that masterly explains Greek mythology. Alfred Lord Tennyson was an influential poet Laurate for over 40 years. He is remembered for his sober style and moralizing tone. The poem was composed after the death of his friend Arthur Hallam and published in 1860. It exhibits Tennyson's unparalleled skill in elaborating on myths and legends.

In the mythological story Tithonus is the son of Laomedon of Troy by a water nymph. In the mythical story Eos (Goddess of Dawn) kidnapped him, asked Zeus to grant Tithonus eternal life but forgot to stipulate eternal youth. Tennyson's *Tithonus* is a tragic monologue. Goddess Eos (Dawn/Aurora) granted him eternal life but not eternal youth. He begs her to end his cursed existence as he has withered into 'white haired shadow', while she remains young. He becomes an old, weak and feeble man. Eos remains eternally beautiful and alluring at every new dawn. Now he is not able to match the passionate youth of his beloved. He asks her to reverse the boon but Gods cannot revoke gifts once bestowed. Tithonus understands that his desire to live forever, to be "different from the rest of mankind" was foolish. Tithonus mourns for himself, recalling his past vitality and glory. He asks Goddess Eos to take her gift back. He repents:

Why should a man desire in any way
to vary from the kindly race of men
or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
where all should pause, as it most meet for all? (6th Stanza).

Eos too regrets over Tithonus' fate. In the Greek myth he is transformed into a cicada (grasshopper), a creature whose relentless chirping symbolizes both eternal voice and insubstantiality.

Death is a necessary part of life and beauty. Life without death becomes horrific. We cannot change the natural order. Through the Poem, Tennyson explores questions regarding limits of desire. Tithonus stands as a symbol of temporal entrapment and aesthetic protest against mortality. Tithonus syndrome/curse is referred in Gerontology and Bioethics to critique the pursuit of extreme life extension: It serves as a cautionary metaphor for technologies that might prolong aging rather than vitality. Tithonus also warns that the fulfilment of a wish without wisdom can become the very fabric of a prison. Tithonus is not merely a character but a condition - the condition of being trapped in time.

Yayati (1959), a mythological novel, originally written in a Marathi by a towering figure in Marathi Literature V.S. Khandekar. He is renowned for his novels, short stories, essays and plays. He is the first Marathi author to win the prestigious Jnanpith Award for his novel *Yayati*. The novel has won Sahitya Akademi Award too. The novel *Yayati* retells the story of mythological king Yayati form the epic *Mahabharata*. The story is taken form *Yayatopakhyan*, a sub narrative of *Adi-Parva* of *Mahabharata*. The novel questions on the nature of morality. Y.P. Kulkarni has translated *Yayati* into English in 1978.

The novel has three narrators: Yayati, Devyani and Sharmishtha. Each section of the story is narrated in the first person from the point of view of its respective narrator. Yayati, the King of Hastinapur, is a disillusioned character who is deprived of pure motherly love. Yati, his elder brother has become ascetic and abandoned all material pleasures, Yayati is gripped by fear and helplessness when he witnesses his father's Nahusha's death. He attempts to bury his grief in carnal pleasures. Devayani, Yayati's wife actually had been in love with Kacha. Sharmishtha, the daughter of Asura King Vrishparva, due to her conflict of Devyani becomes a maid of Devyani. Devyani is unable to create any bond of love with Yayati whereas Sharmishta finds union with him both in body and in mind. A son Pura is born to them and for a time Yayati is happy but Sharmishtha leaves the palace and disillusioned Yayati moves towards the path of moral degradation.

He neglects his royal duties and enjoys physical pleasure with women and wine in the pursuit of hedonistic lifestyle. His son from Sharmishtha Yadu is imprisoned and younger son Puru releases him. Shukracharya, after witnessing his daughter's, Devani's unhappy marriage and Yayati's degradation lay a curse of old age on Yayati.

Old Yayati with his unfulfilled desires asks his sons to lend him their youth. Puru helps him and Yayati enjoys all physical pleasure irrespective of his son's old age. But he understands that Desire for lust will never come to end, the more it is fed, the more it flares up. It is insatiable. He returns Puru his youth, hands over all the responsibilities and retires to *Sanyasashram*. Yayati's journey starts with attachment and ends into detachment. The novel illustrates vain pursuit of material pleasure verses spiritual life.

In this novel, Khandekar has undertaken a profound exploration of lust, love, duty, attachment and liberation. In this respect the philosopher Kant argues – "The concept of happiness is such an indeterminate one that even though everyone wishes to attain happiness, yet he can never say definitely and consistently what is that he really wishes and wills."

Hindu concepts of *Dharma* (duty), *Karma* (action) and *Moksha* (liberation) deeply reflected in Yayati's journey is a Bildungsroman of the soul moving from *Karma* to word *Vairagya* (detachment). Aging is not merely a physical desire but a necessary stage of spiritual growth.

Tithonus' immortality is an unending physical decay, a curse due to his love for Aurora/Eos whereas Yayati doesn't get true love and lust remains in his life He says:

I am the son of king Nahusha
I want Sharmishtha. I want

> Devyani. I want every pretty
> woman on earth. Everyday a
> fresh woman. (251)

For Yayati his desire to be young becomes a trap that leads to moral bankruptcy and self-disgust and spiritual and emotional stagnation. Whereas Tithonus is a passive victim. Ththonus' despair is modern, focussed on the individual's confrontation with a meaningful, unending existence.

Both the texts explore anxieties about time, decay and limits of desire. The figure of Tithonus transforms from a marginal mythological character into central symbol of entrapment and aesthetic protest against morality. Both the works stand as powerful literary monuments to the same profound insights: that life desires meaning from nature. Through the lens of mythology both the authors explore the horrific consequences of serving youth from the natural progression towards age of death. While Yayati ultimately affirms a spiritual path where accepting aging leads to wisdom and liberation, Tithonus presents a starker more tragic version of an unredeemable existential anguish.

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From Myth to Modern Narrative: Retelling the Shiva Legend in Contemporary Indian Fiction – The Shiva Trilogy by Amish Tripathi

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Abstract

This paper analyses how Amish Tripathi's The Shiva Trilogy reinterprets the ancient Hindu tale of Shiva for modern Indian literature, demonstrating the dynamic interaction of continuity and transformation in mythological retellings. The trilogy is based on the Shiva Purana and Hindu cosmology, but Tripathi's story makes Shiva more human by putting him in a historical context. He mixes myth with rational and philosophical ideas to make it more relevant to modern readers. This study contends that Tripathi maintains essential mythological frameworks—such as archetypal characters, moral dichotomies, and symbolic motifs—while reconfiguring the narrative to examine ethical intricacies, identity, and cultural significance for contemporary readers in the twenty-first century. Significant aspects of metamorphosis encompass the humanisation of divine entities, the rationalisation of mythological occurrences, and the redefinition of gender and power dynamics within the narrative universe. The narrative techniques used in the trilogy show how mythology may go beyond its religious or canonical roots to deal with modern problems while still being relevant to conventional cultural memory. Scholarly research indicates that Tripathi's work embodies significant literary tendencies in Indian mythological fiction that integrate pleasure with philosophical contemplation, rendering ancient themes accessible and relevant for contemporary audiences. This study demonstrates that Tripathi's reinterpretation is situated within contemporary discourses of myth in literature, illustrating that The Shiva Trilogy contributes to the ongoing evolution of mythic storytelling. It presents a framework for the preservation and innovation of myth within literary practice, elucidating the enduring significance of myth in current cultural discourse.

keywords: *Mythological Retellings; Contemporary Indian Fiction; Cultural Continuity and Change; Humanization of Myth; The Shiva Trilogy*

1. Introduction

Mythological tales are fundamental to cultural identity, moral frameworks, and collective memory. In India, epics, Puranas, and oral traditions have long been used to tell stories about gods and heroes. In modern writing, nevertheless, these stories are often told again, put in a new light, or recreated to appeal to today's readers. *The Shiva Trilogy* by Amish Tripathi is one of the most commercially successful and generally talked about examples of this tendency. It is a trilogy that mixes myth with fiction, history, and philosophical exploration. The trilogy illustrates the rebirth of myths through narrative alteration, maintaining continuity with ancient mythic frameworks while incorporating modifications that respond to modern cultural and ethical issues.

This study examines the narrative strategies and thematic developments in *The Shiva Trilogy*, contending that Tripathi's reinterpretation of the Shiva myth illustrates the changing function of myth in contemporary Indian literature. These retellings do more than just repeat old stories; they also change how they are understood so that they are still interesting to new readers and in new social situations.

2. Theoretical Framework: Myth, Literature, and Retelling

In literature, mythological retellings involve both keeping some of the original stories and changing them in new and interesting ways. Recent studies show that modern mythological literature in India combines pleasure with philosophical exploration by mixing old and new story elements to appeal to current

readers. Writers like Tripathi, Devdutt Pattanaik, and others have been named as important figures in the return of myth to writing.

Continuity means keeping recognisable mythic elements like archetypes, symbolic motifs, and cultural memory. Change, on the other hand, means reinterpreting characters, narrative voice, and thematic focus to fit modern values, moral frameworks, and aesthetic expectations. In *The Shiva Trilogy*, continuity arises from core mythic components, while change is manifested through narrative structure and philosophical realignment.

3. Reinterpreting Ancient Indian Myths in Amish Tripathi's The Shiva Trilogy

Amish Tripathi's *The Shiva Trilogy* offers a contemporary reinterpretation of ancient Indian myths by transforming traditional mythological stories to align with modern perspectives. The trilogy—*The Immortals of Meluha, The Secret of the Nagas,* and *The Oath of the Vayuputras*—draws inspiration from Hindu mythological texts such as the Vedas, Puranas, and epics, while diverging from typical representations of divinity. Rather than portraying Shiva as a deity from birth, Tripathi envisions him as a historical figure whose remarkable deeds, leadership qualities, and ethical principles inspire people to view him as divine. This human-focused narrative redefines the notion of divinity as something achieved through virtuous actions rather than something that is simply inherited from a supernatural lineage.

The trilogy preserves well-known mythological components, such as the river Ganga, the Nagas, the Somras, and the ongoing struggle between good and evil. Nevertheless, these components are elucidated through social, political, and scientific perspectives instead of solely through mysticism. For instance, the Somras is depicted not just as a divine potion but as a potent substance that can have both advantageous and harmful effects, mirroring contemporary issues regarding technology, ethics, and environmental stewardship. By means of such reinterpretations, Tripathi makes ancient myths more rational, rendering them intellectually stimulating for present-day readers. Shiva's evolution from a tribal leader to the Mahadev represents the metamorphosis of an ordinary person into an exemplary figure through the principles of sacrifice, justice, and compassion.

4. Continuity in Tripathi's Retelling

4.1 Mythic Structures and Archetypes

The Shiva Trilogy is based on Hindu mythology, especially the Shiva Purana and other stories that show Shiva as an ascetic and a cosmic power. Tripathi keeps important symbolic components, such a figure that represents both destruction and regeneration, cosmic balance, and moral transcendence. He puts them in a story arc that is similar to the *hero's journey*. This archetypal structure is similar to mythic storytelling patterns that have been used in many cultures and times.

The trilogy keeps characters and themes that readers will recognise, such Shiva, Sati, the Nagas, and philosophical principles like *dharma* and moral conflict. These parts make sure that the story connects with the cultural memory of readers who are familiar with the legendary tradition, even though the story is set in a made-up universe.

4.2 Symbolic Continuity

Even though the story changes, many mythic aspects are still easy to recognise. For instance, Tripathi keeps symbolic references to Shiva's blue neck, the cosmic meaning of things, and the conflict between chaos and order, but he usually gives other, more logical answers. The enduring presence of these themes illustrates how legendary symbolism remains a foundational element of tradition, despite ongoing reinterpretation.

5. Change in Narrative and Conceptual Reimagining

5.1 Humanization of the Divine

One of Tripathi's most important new ideas is how he made Shiva more human. Tripathi doesn't show Shiva as a faraway, mysterious god. Instead, he shows him as a real person from history who has weaknesses, moral issues, and personal goals. This method fits with the way that modern mythological

literature is going, where gods or heroes are turned into complicated people whose travels show how people live.

Tripathi's Shiva is born as Neelkanth, a tribal outcast whose journey to become a legendary figure involves making moral decisions, thinking about himself, and getting involved in society. This change makes the story more relevant to modern readers and changes the way we think about the supernatural as something we may achieve via action and moral choice. Tripathi moves the story's focus from divine transcendence to human responsibility by doing this.

5.2 Rationalization and Literary Realism

Another transforming method in Tripathi's story is the rationalisation of legendary events. Tripathi doesn't always show supernatural events as unexplainable wonders. Instead, he often gives logical or semi-historical explanations. For example, the blue throat (Neelkanth) is thought to be caused by medicine or symbols, not just supernatural forces. This method connects myth with modern rational thought, making the story easy to understand for people who like logic and reality as well as mythic resonance.

5.3 Ethical and Cultural Reframing

Tripathi's story changes the way we think about moral and cultural issues, going beyond simple good and bad. The legendary tradition frequently delineates cosmic powers into distinct moral categories; however, Tripathi confuses these classifications by illustrating the social, economic, and political influences that impact characters' motivations. From this perspective, evil is depicted not as intrinsic malevolence but instead as imbalance and misinterpretation, reflecting modern ethical discussions.

Tripathi turns old myths into a way to talk about things like governance, justice, and social change by putting these conversations into the story. This change in direction shows how modern retellings use myth to question current issues while keeping the rich stories of traditional lore.

6. World-Building and Narrative Techniques

Tripathi's retelling works because he comes up with new themes and tells a good story. Modern academics focus on how the trilogy builds its world, paying attention to cultural realism, historical complexity, and philosophical sophistication.

The world of Meluha, Branga, and the Nagas' realms is shown as a consistent place that combines mythical topography with realistic social institutions. Language, traditions, and social standards are made to look like those of ancient nations that are based on real history. This gives readers an immersive experience that mixes legendary grandeur with believable stories.

Tripathi makes sure that the novel appeals to a wide range of readers while still being thematically deep by using cinematic pacing, realistic fight scenes, and character-driven storytelling. This mix of form and topic has helped the trilogy become quite popular and of interest to scholars.

7. Gender, Power, and Mythic Reinterpretation

Contemporary adaptations of myth frequently revaluate the roles of female characters and power dynamics. In *The Shiva Trilogy*, characters like as Sati and Kali are not simply stereotypes; they are shown with agency, complexity, and influence. Studies on the feminist reinterpretation of the trilogy underscore how Tripathi's depiction of these characters contests conventional patriarchal narratives by bestowing upon them intellectual and moral autonomy.

The trilogy does not completely destroy old gender hierarchies; however, it creates substantial narrative space for female strength and influence, mirroring modern literary explorations of gender roles.

8. Reception and Cultural Impact

The Shiva Trilogy has generated extensive discourse among readers and reviewers, notable for its narrative innovations and reinterpretations of conventional mythologies. Studies of how the trilogy has been received by scholars show that it has helped make mythological fiction more popular in India by making old stories interesting, thought-provoking, and easy to understand for modern readers.

Some people who don't like the trilogy say that its writing style is too simple or that it strays too far from traditional sources. But the fact that it can spark discussions about myth, culture, and literature shows how important the trilogy is to modern Indian letters.

9. Conclusion

Amish Tripathi's *The Shiva Trilogy* shows how old myths can come back to life in modern literature through a dynamic mix of continuity and change. Tripathi's retelling places myth inside the concerns of modern readers by keeping the basic mythic frameworks while adding humanisation, rationalisation, and moral depth. Scholarly research substantiates that the trilogy not only provides entertainment but also enriches ongoing discourses concerning identity, morality, and cultural memory within Indian fiction. As myth is reinterpreted in many literary genres, texts like as *The Shiva Trilogy* exemplify the persistent influence of myth to educate, provoke, and motivate future generations.

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A Counter-narrative of Ahalya's Myth in Koral Dasgupta's *Ahalya*, Reflecting Resistance, Agency and Feministic Identity

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Abstract:

Mythical characters in Indian mythology and their specific aspect or virtue are glorified in stories and films. Mythopoeia a subgenre of speculative fiction which catches the attention of writers who write artificial myths to recast mythological characters with a different facet uncovered by mythology. Their subversive literature presents the inner element of a specific character treated as subordinator in the myth. The counter narrative of such fiction enlightens the individual side of the mythical character exposing gender politics. Ahalya is mythical character in Ramayana who is created by Lord Brahma with utmost care and pride. Her beauty and charm fascinates every god and demons in the heaven. Ahalya is recognized in Hindu mythology for her disobedience of patriarchal rules set for women and punishment given by Rishi Guatam, her husband for infidelity. Ahalya in Ramayana is narrated as voiceless, passive archetype of wife who is cursed by her husband sage Gautam and later redeemed by Rama the ideal male in Hindu myths. Dasgupta has deconstructed this identity of Ahalya by narrating her agent of her story retold with feministic perspective. Through feministic narrative Koral Dasgupta offers Ahalya power to interrogate gender politics in Indian society and strongly asserts her feminine identity with desire, intellect and resisting patriarchal limits.

Objectives: *The present paper has specific objectives to study the novel Ahalya by Koral Dasgupta. They are as follows.*

1. *To study subversion of Ahalya, a mythical character in Ramayana.*
2. *To study gender politics and epistemic violence in Ahalya*
3. *To examine feministic courage to challenge patriarchal restrains through Ahalya's character*
4. *To study reinterpretation of Indian epics exploring voiceless and underrepresented women.*
5. *To study Ahalya as an unyielding voice of womanhood.*

Introduction:

Mythological narratives often reveal deeply rooted cultural norms. In the Indian epic tradition of Ramayana and Mahabharata, many mythological characters are glorified for many centuries as symbols of charity, sacrifice, duties, truth, purity, fidelity and trust. All Male characters in Indian mythology are narrated with dignity, heroism, morality and principled figures. They are highly honored in Indian culture as ideal males to be followed as iconic figures. Mythical characters like Ram, Krishna, Arjun, Parashuram, Bhim, Hanuman, Balram, Laxman and Yudhistir are universalized for their traits and individuality who are established by the great writers like Valmiki and Vyas. On the other hand women in these myths are underrepresented as fragile, unfaithful, passive, voiceless lacking power and agency. They are narrated as supportive characters of these powerful male who are redeemed out of their curse by these male only. Rather they are narrated as the root cause for failure of these moral principled heroes in Indian myth by their unfaithfulness and earthly desires for sensual pleasure.

Draupadi, Mandodari, Tara, Kunti and Ahalya are admired in Indian culture as Panchkanyas. They are symbols of devotion, chastity, sacrifice and resilience as an ideal Indian woman shows cultural hegemony where the destiny of these women is decided by their husband. In spite of being powerful, courageous, moral, and dedicated these *panchkanyas* are narrated secondary without agency and selfhood. Sources of Ahalya who is created by Brahma, her heavenly beauty, marriage with Gautam Rishi, encounter with Indra, punishment and redemption by Rama is reflected with different versions in many myths like Ramayana, Bhagavta Purana, Vishnu Purana, Harivanshpurana, Padma Purana and Skandpurana. All these myth portray

traditional story of Ahalya highlighting Ahalya's physical beauty, her seduction by Indra, cursed with somewhat variation with permanent stigma of infidelity, but Koral Dasgupta revisits and alters this narrative with feministic perspective placing Ahalya at centre of the story. It is a counter narrative of Ahalya not as subordinate character but individual as agent of her own story with highly ardent for her autonomy, choices and love which traces defiance against patriarchy. The novel rearticulates Ahalya's feminine identity interrogating deep rooted gender politics in Indian culture which subverts women as second sex. Ahalya in all myths is narrated as an object of possession by male like Brahma who created her, Gautam married and cursed for her infidelity, Indra seduced her and finally she is redeemed again by Ram exhibits women are void of identity. In Indian mythology, Ahalya stands as a timeless figure who challenges patriarchal pressure and societal norms constraining feminine desires of love and femininity. Her character is prejudiced by male biased beliefs blaming her as disloyal wife to her husband forbidding women for love and desire.

Koral Dasgupta's novel Ahalya reasserts Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler's theory of gender politics, exposing how patriarchal discourse represents women as feeble and unfaithful. These narratives construct and confirm women's subordinate identities. The novel itself is a counter discourse subverting age old patriarchal pressure by altering female subjectivity through resistance. The novel highlights different facets of Ahalya's personality altering the masculine view of Ahalya as a woman.

Reclaiming Feminine Agency::

Dasgupta reclaims Ahalya's feminine identity introducing her as protagonist of the novel whose inner voice, feeling, interests and desires are boldly and clearly uncovered through her narrative. Ahalya's voice against her captivity under Brahma's fatherhood, Gautam's austerity, Indra's deception, and Rama's liberation creates feminine assertion. She is presented as the voice of all such women who are denied agency in myths. Instead of being an object of patriarchy,, Ahalya becomes a provocative individual with consciousness of her own thoughts and daring to express them. The novel alters male biased narrative where Ahalya, a silent, unvoiced woman punished for her seduction rebels against ethics for women to appease her feminine desires. She overthrows gender norms when she interrogates Brahma about her marriage with unwanted person, boldly seats on side of Gautam for preaching, assists him in his work exhibit her claim for equality.

"You are a woman already,' I heard the Creator speak. "A seeker of truth. A follower of the divine. And a victim of her own intimidating strength. After your birthing is complete you will also soon learn the skills of a manipulator who attempts to encrust the reality in a shield of affection and beauty." (Dasgupta 22)

Desire and Power:

A prominent feminist concern is explored throughout the novel showing a strong feminine desire of beauty and power to claim her identity and gender equality intersect traditional mythical positions of Ahalya as a temptress, seductive, adulterous weak woman punished for her unforgivable crime of making love. Ahalya's desire for bodily pleasure from her husband Gautam proves her resolution and consciousness of her individual existence as woman. The complexity of her desire to be loved and cared by her husband is never quenched by Gautam. The momentary desire for Indra as a lover displays her feminine desires. The mental and emotional calmness steadiness after her curse and transformation into stone achieves our admiration for Ahalya's power to accept societal and moral blame of adultery. Her stubborn desire and determination for achieving her love and power to overthrow marital code of conduct brightly illuminates Ahalya's figure in our mind as a powerful protagonist. Ahalya challenges the unequal power dynamics between Ahalya and male figures in the myth like her creator Brahma and her husband Guatam who controls her life by refuting the concept of consent in power relation.

> "The innocence of my longing, the stubborn desire, the commitment in my call of love.The overpowering *indriyas*. The romance of Indra. The resistance, indulgence and withdrawal of Gautam. In one blink Rama would witness it all. (191)

This exploration strike at the foundations of the binary of purity and impurity and raises questions about how women's bodies and choices are controlled within patriarchal mythologies and societies.

Resilience:

The name of woman is resilience that shapes her as per the changing demands of patriarchy. Ahalya unwilling to leave heaven said to go on earth with Guatam. She mutely follows him to the earth. Gautam never cared for her sufferings, loneliness or even felt special about her. She still has no complaints. Ahalya adjusts her new life with Gautam. Her resilience reaches to climax when Brahma declares her marriage with Gautam an austere sage. Her tender romantic feelings for love and Lover Indra are uprooted by this marriage. Ahalya's high resilience when Indra's forsakes her after seduction reveals her heroic feature. She is much resilient to face her destruction as a mute, immovable stone without any regret, hatred or anger.. Ahalya seems more powerful and committed when she accepts responsibility of her acts alone.

"Could there be a bigger insult to a man than an obstinate, ambitious wife unwilling to yield to unfair sacrifices? Since the limitations of a man is always explained as the failure of his woman. I too stood there bearing the consequences, discarded and disowned like a barren rock, observing much more than what I did till a while back but feeling nothing! No anger; no hatred, no disgrace, no hurt. (182)

Ahalya's transformation into stone represents enforced silences of women underlying patriarchal hegemony to suppress women's voices. The novel Ahalya thematically stresses on social expectation of women's passivity and acceptance of the male authority and agency. Koral Dasgupta reclaims women's narrative which is subsided by the male narratives. Her attempt to unearth the real story and history of Hindu women which is not included by the great epic writer Vyas and Valmiki reminds us the subaltern Group of Guha and Gayatri Spivak's Can Subaltern Speaks?. The Indian mythology has suppressed feminine autonomy and their expression of womanhood by placing male at the centre of the myths. Koral has reasserted women's narratives through Ahalya which is erased by male biased mythology reclaiming her feminine identity to have choice and voice to express it.

Koral Dasgupta's Ahalya exemplifies how myth can be transformed through a feminist lens to reflect contemporary concerns about gender, power, and narrative authority. By centering Ahalya's internal experience, critiquing patriarchal moral frameworks, and reclaiming female agency, the novel not only retells an ancient story but reinterprets it as a powerful statement on women's autonomy and resistance. She has introduced Ahalya as a lover, ambitious, futuristic, royal and calculative; not afraid to express, nor hesitant to ignore the binding rules of the world. The narrative serves as a reminder that revisiting traditional texts with a gender-sensitive lens can reveal silences and biases that continue to shape cultural perceptions of women. Wronged and unfairly judged; Ahalya's tale is ultimately one of resilience, redemption, and the enduring strength of a woman reclaiming her dignity.

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Role of Indian Films in the Preservation of Mythological Traditions

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Abstract –

India has rich heritage of cultural traditions and Indian films have played an important role in preserving and spreading mythological traditions. The films, a new medium of entertainment act as a bridge between ancient stories and modern audiences. These stories are mainly come from the ***Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas and regional folk tales.*** *Mythological films have existed since the early days of Indian cinema. One of the first Indian films,* ***Raja Harishchandra (1913)*** *directed by Dadasaheb Phalke was based on Hindu mythology and it helped to build cultural pride and national feeling. The film makers use cinematic techniques such as* ***visual, special effects, emotions, music, dance and drama.*** *Early mythological films promoted traditional values, unity and struggle against colonial rule. Modern films and animated shows such as* ***Little Krishna****, Bal Ganesh and* ***Chhota Bheem*** *mix ancient myths with modern technology with global styles. This helps keep mythological stories meaningful for today's generation. Indian mythology reaches people of all ages and countries through films, OTT platforms and worldwide distribution. This supports cultural identity and moral learning. However, there are some challenges such as changes to original stories, commercial pressure and disputes about faithfulness. Indian films are both a* ***living record*** *and a* ***creative force*** *that keeps mythological traditions alive. This paper explains how the filmmakers have retold and reimagined mythological stories to preserve Indian culture and traditions.*

Key Words :*Mythological Films, Cultural Heritage, Cinematic Techniques, Animation, OTT Platforms, Digital Media, Film Adaptation, Indian Mythology*

Introduction

Indian film industry especially Bollywood is one of the largest film industries in the world and has played a significant role in protecting India's mythological heritage. Many Indian films are based on ancient epics like the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* as well as stories from the *Puranas*, *Vedas* and regional folk traditions. These mythological stories are the foundation of Indian culture, traditions and identity. These stories teach important philosophies of life such as *Dharma* which means doing what is right, *Karma* means actions and their results, *Bhakti* means devotion to God and the idea that life moves in cycles. These philosophies were passed down through oral storytelling, dance, drama and religious texts for many generations. With the inception of films in the early 20th century, it became a strong and popular way to show these stories visually. Films helped bring ancient wisdom to modern audiences in an easy and attractive form. In this way, films connected traditional myths with contemporary society and kept them alive for future generations.

The beginning of Indian cinema is closely connected with mythology. India's first full length film was *Raja Harishchandra* which was made by Dadasaheb Phalke in 1913. It was based on the stories from the Vedas and Hindu mythology. It presented the struggles of King Harishchandra and how he was finally saved by divine power. This film is landmark and started the tradition of making mythological films in India. During British rule, this film also created feelings of national pride and helped people connect with their culture. It indicated that films could be used to preserve Indian traditions, culture and values. Over the years, filmmakers from Bollywood or Hindi cinema and regional film industries like Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam have continued to retell these mythological stories. By doing so, they have kept these traditions alive even as society changed because of urban growth, globalization and new technology.

This paper explains that Indian films help to preserve mythological traditions and culture in three main ways: through retelling old stories, using new and creative film techniques and spreading these stories to society through popular culture. At the same time, films face challenges such as commercial pressure and debates about how faithful they remain to the original stories. The paper shows that mythological films has two important roles: it protects cultural heritage and also presents myths in new and modern ways. Scholars point out that films change deep philosophical ideas into stories that are easy to understand and emotionally powerful. This helps to pass mythological knowledge from one generation to the next and strengthens national identity. These mythological films reach people all over the world in the age of digital media. This help to increase global awareness of Indian culture and strengthens India's influence internationally.

Brief Survey of Mythological Films in India

The history of mythological films in India shows how the country changed socially and politically from the time of British rule to the period after independence. In the silent film age, Dadasaheb Phalke started making mythological films in India. He was basically a photographer and influenced from western cinema techniques. He produced his first film *Raja Harishchandra* in 1913. This film is considered first Indian Film. He is known as the Pioneer of father of Indian cinema. His other films are *Mohini Bhasmasur* (1914) and *Lanka Dahan* (1917). These films showed stories from Hindu mythology. These films helped people connect with their culture and build a sense of identity. Dadasaheb Phalke used simple special effects and stage like scenes to create a feeling of holy viewing. Watching these films felt almost like a religious experience for the audience. His films were inspired by traditional religious pictures and Parsi theatre. Many people from villages came to see these movies as if they were going on a pilgrimage. Bullock carts filled the areas around theatres and audiences watched the films to get a *Darshan* of Gods like Rama and Hanuman on screen.

Mythological films became very popular during 1930 and 1940. At one time, they made up almost 40% of all films produced in India. Later, their number reduced when social and realistic films became more common after the introduction of sound technology. Directors like V. Shantaram at Prabhat Studios made important mythological films such as *Ayodhyache Raja* (1932) and *Amrit Manthan* (1934). These films showed grand stories like the churning of the ocean to get *Amrut*, using large sets and powerful music. Many of these films had a nationalist message and were linked to India's freedom struggle. At the same time, devotional or saint films became popular. These films focused on religious saints and their devotion to God. A famous example is *Sant Tukaram* (1936) based on the life of Saint Tukaram. The film is directed by Vishnupant Damle and Sheikh Fattelal produced at Prabhat Film Company. It ran in theatres for more than a year. The film used devotional songs or *Abhangas* and miracle stories to spread messages of equality and against caste discrimination.

Films based on mythology continued to be made after India became independent, especially in regional cinema. One important film was *Ram Rajya* (1943) which was directed by Vijay Bhatt. It showed the kingdom of Lord Rama as a model of truth and justice. This was the only film Mahatma Gandhi ever watched and it ran in theatres for more than 100 weeks. It shows its great popularity. In regional films like Telugu cinema actor N.T. Rama Rao became famous for playing role of Gods. He acted in 42 mythological films often as Lord Krishna and Lord Rama. People respected him deeply for these roles. In the 1970s, the film *Jai Santoshi Maa* (1975) by Vijay Sharma became a huge hit success. It created a new form of devotion to the Goddess Santoshi Maa. The film used simple religious stories and popular songs like '*Main to aarti utaaru*.' Many people began worshipping the Goddess after watching this film.

Television also helped continue the tradition of mythological storytelling. Shows like **B.R. Chopra's *Mahabharata* during 1988 to 1990)** and **Ramanand Sagar's *Ramayana* during 1987 to 1988** became very popular across India. Families watched them together and these stories became part of people's shared memory and daily life. In recent times, mythological stories have returned in new forms. Animated series such as ***Bal Ganesh* (2007), *Chhota Bheem* (2008) and *Little Krishna* (2009)** introduce mythological ideas to children in a fun and simple way. These shows help keep oral traditions alive in digital form. This

development shows how cinema and television have changed with time from silent films to TV serials and now OTT platforms. It preserve mythological stories alive for new generations despite changes in society.

Film Adaptations and Cinematic Techniques

Indian films use many creative ways to retell and preserve mythological traditions. These methods are based on old ideas like Bharatamuni's *Natyashastra* and its *rasa* theory. It explains how emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger and devotion should be shown in art and drama. Special effects have played an important role from the beginning of cinema. Babubhai Mistry's *Sampoorna Ramayana* (1961) showed demons changing their shapes and the building of Rama's bridge with the help of songs and visual effects. Music and dance are also very important in mythological films. They come from folk and classical traditions. In the film, *Hum Aapke Hain Koun..!* (1994), wedding songs and rituals show family traditions and values. Some scenes also give moral guidance, similar to how Krishna gives advice in Indian myths. Different regions of India add their own local culture to these stories. For example, Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali* (1955) combines realistic storytelling with the emotion of sadness and ideas from Hindu and Buddhist stories about how life is temporary.

Modern Indian films try to keep a balance between tradition and new ideas. Mani Ratnam's film Raavan (2010) tells the story of the *Ramayana* from Ravana's point of view. Rajkumar Hirani's film *PK* (2014) uses humor to question blind religious practices and encourages people to think carefully about faith. Animated films like *Hanuman* (2005), *Bal Ganesh* (2007), *Chootha Bhim* (2008) etc. use animation to make mythological stories interesting and easy for children to understand. These films show that myths are not fixed stories, they change and grow with time.

Social and Cultural Impact

Indian cinema helps to preserve mythological traditions and strongly influences culture, morals and social unity. It creates a shared sense of 'Indianness' and teaches values like courage, unity and patience by showing stories from epics and myths through popular films. For example in Amir Khan's film *Lagaan* (2001), cricket represents a fight like in the *Mahabharata*. Films such as *Mother India* (1957) present women as goddess like figures, connecting myths with national identity. Other movies like *Hum Aapke Hain Koun...!* influence social customs such as wedding rituals. Films also supports social reform: saint films like *Dharmatma* (1935), *Saint Tukaram* etc., speak against caste discrimination and film *Bhakta Kabir* (1942) promotes unity between Hindus and Muslims. For Indians living abroad, films like *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995) keep traditions alive and build pride in culture. Around the world, Indian films act as soft power by spreading ideas like devotion and karma. Older generations see myth based films as moral lessons, while younger viewers prefer modern stories with strong visuals and emotional connection. Thus, films renew interest in heritage, promote harmony and also question unfair traditions.

Challenges in Preserving Mythological Traditions

Although Indian cinema has helped to protect mythological traditions, it also faces some challenges. One big challenge is commercialization of films. Filmmakers often make deep and meaningful ideas too simple and turn them into only entertainment to attract more audience. This can damage the true message of the original stories. Another significant challenge is globalization. Western styles and ideas are entering Indian films, which sometimes reduces the richness of traditional stories. Regional culture is often hidden by Bollywood directors. Many local myths and folk stories do not get enough attention or proper representation. There is also a generation gap between young people like modern and creative storytelling instead of moral or teaching based stories. Because of this, it becomes difficult to show traditional myths in their original form. However, new trends in cinema are trying to solve these problems. Today, OTT platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime give space for deeper and more meaningful storytelling. For example, films like *PK* question blind beliefs but still respect true devotion and faith.

New technologies such as Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality and Artificial Intelligence can make films more interesting and lifelike. These tools can help to present sacred texts like the *Bhagavad Gita* in ways that connect with today's global problems and modern life. Modern films are also becoming more inclusive by linking mythology with current issues such as protecting the environment and improving mental

health through practices like yoga. This helps ancient traditions remain meaningful in the present time. Filmmakers are encouraged to make responsible and ethical adaptations to show proper respect for mythology. They should take guidance from scholars and experts, so that creativity is balanced with respect for sacred stories and traditions.

Conclusion

Indian cinema has played a very important role in preserving India's mythological traditions and culture. The journey of Indian films began with visionary director Dadasaheb Phalke, who first showed stories from the epics on screen using simple visual effects. Films retell ancient stories from the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Puranas* in a way that is emotional and engaging by using the idea of *rasa*. At the same time, these films also connect old myths with present day issues like justice, duty and human values. Film helps people to understand their culture while also thinking about modern life.

Indian cinema maintains cultural continuity and strengthens people's sense of identity through mythological films. It helps to spread moral lessons such as truth, sacrifice and respect for elders. Films still acts as a bridge between tradition and modern society, even though there are problems like commercialization and turning myths into entertainment products. Indian films can be seen as a living archive of myths because they keep ancient stories alive in a new form for each generation. These films now reach people all over the world with the growth of digital platforms and global audiences. Therefore, cinema will continue to support cultural exchange and ensure that India's mythological heritage survives and remains meaningful in the future.

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Greed, Power, And The Illusion Of Liberation: A Thematic Study Of '*The Mystery Of Moksha Island*'

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Abstract

This research writes about The Mystery of Moksha Island, a web series that is currently available to the public. The show is a survival thriller, but eventually becomes about an isolated island that is a 'surrogate' area for one's deepest inclinations of basic humanity and the anarchy of society. This paper will explore how the common goal of acquiring an inheritance serves to deepen the greed and suspicion of some characters, despite their alleged cooperation and trust. The research gives a glimpse into how this series upturns the convention of 'moksha' which can be translated into spiritual liberation in a conventional sense, into a realm of control, exploitation, and moral surrender. The research will cover concealed origins and family secrets, in addition to impacting an individual's presumed identity and imposing moral responsibilities on both younger and older generations. Through this work, The Mystery of Moksha Island is presented as an important piece of cultural literature because it symbolises today's struggles with capitalism, science, and human fragility through a combination of literary, psychological, and sociopolitical perspectives. Ultimately, this series reveals the vision of progress without ethics and the question of whether true freedom can be attained in spite of ethics, as this series ends.

Keywords: *Moksha Island, Survival Narrative, Greed, Isolation, Power, Psychoanalysis, Identity*

Introduction

The Mystery of Moksha Island, another highly anticipated series on Hotstar, brings with it an engaging tale of suspense, mystery, and adventure. The series is based on a set of people who travel to some mysterious Moksha Island in search of immortality. However, when they get to know more about the secrets of this mysterious island, they realise that the truth is far more appalling than they had anticipated. Ravi Prakash, Priya Anand, and Jagapathi Babu are some of the most talented actors in this series. The series is being handled by director Karthik Reddy, a well-known director in this field. The audience will be hooked with this engaging storyline, breathtaking images, and dramatic acting. Telugu thriller series, produced with excitement because of an engaging storyline.

Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To analyse the major themes in *The Mystery of Moksha Island*, with special reference to greed, inheritance, scientific ethics, isolation, identity, and liberation.
2. To examine the psychological and emotional dimensions of the characters, focusing on fear, paranoia, survivor's guilt, trauma, and moral conflict under conditions of isolation.
3. To investigate the symbolic significance of "moksha" and its ironic representation as a space of control rather than spiritual liberation.
4. To analyse family relationships and inheritance as mechanisms of power, identity formation, and emotional conflict.
5. To understand the impact of isolation on human behaviour, highlighting how social structures influence morality and ethical decision-making.

Major themes in the *Mystery of Moksha Island:*

"*The Mystery of Moksha Island*" brings up intricate moral, psychological, and human themes in a survival thriller format. "*The island is a symbolic platform where spiritual irony, isolation, scientific ambitions, greed, and broken identities burst into action*," and it studies *"modern forms of power dynamics and how people can be vulnerable to situations*," among other themes (OTT Play, 2024).

1. Greed and Inheritance as Catalyst : Greed is established as the principal driving force in *The Mystery of Moksha Island*, which is generated by the prospect of inheritance, thus assembling people with very little objective commonality among them otherwise. Through this, inheritance functions less as a reward and more as a narrative snare, wherein peril lurks beneath the surface of a promise of worldly gain. The need for financial gain is inextricably bound up with a need for validation in *The Mystery of Moksha Island*; gaining access to the scientist's wealth is a kind of validation of status, of acceptance, and of power in itself, rather than simply a means of financial security

2. Science vs. Ethics : One of the major conflicts in the series is the battle between moral responsibility and technological advancement. The island's secret was taken from the late scientist's medical and biotechnology studies, which bring up disturbing questions of accountability, exploitation, and authorisation. The series repeatedly asks whether ethical errors can be excused by scientific advancements and who is finally accountable for the consequences of such aspirations.

The scientist is depicted as an ethically dubious character whose pursuit of advancement supersedes moral restraints, rather than some obvious villain or a heroic inventor. Although his work is rooted in human misery and secrecy, it provides progress and healing. "*This ambiguity mirrors real-world bioethical debates surrounding pharmaceutical industries and clinical experimentation*" (Beauchamp & Childress, 2019). Being removed from social control and moral regulation, this island symbolises ungoverned scientific power. Through this series, the moral and psychological effects of a dehumanised research process are noted via conducting research in a distant, controlled setting and criticising systems where results are placed before people's dignity.

3. Isolation and Human Nature : Isolation is not merely a setting in *The Mystery of Moksha Island* but a thematic mechanism for exposing human nature. Removed from societal norms, legal structures, and moral accountability, characters confront their raw instincts. "*The island functions as a social laboratory where civility dissolves under pressure."* (OTT Play, 2024). The idea that morality is inbuilt has been challenged in the series. Rather, it implies that moral behaviour often depends on outside enforcement. People switch between cooperation and cruelty after these structures are gone from existence. Rapid changes in power dynamics occur when social status is replaced as a tool of dominance by knowledge, physical strength, and manipulation of others. Isolation psychologically reinforces self-interest and nervousness. Characters defend immoral behaviour by claiming it's essential to their survival, illustrating how easily moral values can be compromised. "*The series thus aligns with psychological theories that argue situational forces strongly influence behaviour"* (Zimbardo, 2007).

4. Moksha as Irony : In *The Mystery of Moksha Island*, isolation serves as both an environment and a thematic tool for revealing human character. After being cut off from morality, legislation, and society, the characters must confront their instincts. The inherent morality comes under scrutiny in the series. Rather, it implies that moral behaviour frequently depends on impartial oversight. People switch between alliances and cruelty once these processes dissolve. Significant changes in power dynamics result from knowledge, character strength, and manipulation taking the place of social position as a tool of supremacy. Psychologically, isolation leads to anxiety and self-interest. Characters illustrate with remarkable ease which moral principles can be discarded by justifying bad behaviour as being crucial to their survival. In this sense, the initiative supports psychological theories that suggest that contextual variables have a significant impact on how individuals act.

There is also much metaphorical irony in the title Moksha Island. Moksha, a concept in Indian philosophy, stands for freedom from ignorance, pain, and the life and death cycles. The island, on the other

hand, offers hell, moral compromise, and psychic incarceration instead of spiritual deliverance. This disparity creates one of the most potent thematic assertions of the series (OTT Play, 2024).

5. Identity and Family Secrets : "*The driving forces of the characters are heavily dependent on identity and ethnicity*." (OTT Play, 2024). The revelation regarding hidden heirs, lost links, or treachery in their families shakes the very foundations of the protagonist's identity. The inheritance is no longer a mere right to property; instead, it is linked to a sense of belonging, legitimacy, or guilt. Family secrets involve emotional pain that comes from rivalry and abandonment. It becomes hard for characters to reconcile their ethical standards and personal natures. Being born into a family of scientists is shown to be both a boon and a bane, leading characters to wonder if they will inherit money or a righteous legacy. The series suggests that choice determines identity, not lineage. Only when individuals choose how they will respond to their inherited position is legacy relevant. The Mystery of Moksha Island, therefore, subverts the notion of family history as fate in favour of moral choice.

Conclusion

The Mystery of Moksha Island is a comprehensive study of modern ambition and ethical compromise in its analyses of avarice, bioethics, loneliness, spiritual irony, and identity. The island becomes a "field test" for human ideals, owing to how easily power, fear, and need can cloud ethical perception. The series raises more questions than answers with regard to issues of responsibility, progress, and the true nature of liberation.

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A Study of Myths in Chicana/o Culture Reflected in Chicana/o Literature

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Abstract:

Myths have always been a vital part of Chicana/o culture, carrying the collective memory, beliefs, and moral codes of the Mexican American community. Chicana/o literature, emerging strongly in the 20th century, uses myth as a creative and political tool to redefine identity, resist marginalization, and reclaim indigenous and mestizo roots. Through mythic figures such as La Llorona, La Virgen de Guadalupe, and La Malinche, writers express the struggles of cultural duality and gender identity. Authors like Gloria Anzaldúa, Rudolfo Anaya, and Ana Castillo transform traditional myths into narratives that challenge patriarchal and colonial structures, creating a space for cultural pride and feminist reinterpretation. This paper explores how Chicana/o authors use mythology to reconstruct history, voice resistance, and redefine spiritual and social identity. Using examples from literary works and critical studies, it demonstrates that myth in Chicana/o literature is not merely symbolic, it is a living force that continues to shape collective identity and artistic expression in contemporary Chicana/o thought.

Key words: Chicana/o, Myths, Culture, Tradition, Community, etc.

Introduction:

Chicana/o literature explores how stories, culture, and identity shape the Mexican American experience. Myths play an important role in this writing because they carry shared beliefs, memories, and hopes. For Chicana/o writers, myths connect people to Indigenous and mestizo roots while expressing the experience of living between Mexican and American cultures. During the Chicana/o Movement, writers used myth to reclaim lost history and resist racism and cultural erasure. Figures like La Llorona, La Virgen de Guadalupe, and La Malinche are reimagined as symbols of survival, faith, and complex identity. Writers such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros, and Rudolfo Anaya use myth to challenge injustice, celebrate mixed identity, and show how cultural struggle can become a source of strength

Background: Myths in Chicana/o Culture:

Chicana/o culture is shaped by a rich blend of Indigenous Mesoamerican traditions and Spanish Catholic beliefs. Over time, these traditions came together and formed a unique cultural identity. A strong example of this blending is La Virgen de Guadalupe. She brings together the Aztec mother goddess Tonantzin and the Catholic Virgin Mary. For Chicana/o communities, she stands for faith, unity, and survival during times of struggle. Myths play an important role in everyday life. They appear in family stories, religious practices, and community celebrations. These stories are not just old legends; they teach values about pain, strength, and justice. For many Mexican Americans, myths help maintain a connection with ancestors while adjusting to life in the United States.

La Llorona, the “Weeping Woman,” is one of the most famous mythic figures. She represents sorrow and loss but also resilience. In Chicana/o literature, writers use her story to show women reclaiming their voices and strength. Another key figure is La Malinche, often blamed for betrayal during Spanish colonization. Modern writers reinterpret her as a survivor who lived between two cultures and helped shape a new identity. La Virgen de Guadalupe also remains a powerful symbol. Chicana feminists view her as a strong and protective mother rather than a passive figure. Together, La Llorona, La Malinche, and La Virgen de Guadalupe express themes of motherhood, suffering, and renewal. These myths preserve cultural memory and help Chicana/o writers challenge history and imagine freedom.

Chicana/o Literature and Cultural Identity:

Chicana/o literature is more than storytelling; it is a powerful way for Mexican Americans to express identity and celebrate their mixed cultural heritage. During the Chicano Movement of the 1960s, writers began exploring what it means to live between Indigenous, Mexican, and Anglo-American cultures. Myths played an important role in this process because they helped reconnect people with their ancestral roots and recover histories that had been ignored or silenced.

Rudolfo Anaya is one of the earliest writers to use myth in this way. In *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), he explores spirituality and identity through the journey of a young boy, Antonio, who learns from Ultima, a traditional healer. Ultima represents Indigenous wisdom and respect for nature. Anaya blends Catholic faith with Indigenous beliefs, showing that different traditions can exist together. Antonio's inner conflict reflects the larger struggle of many Chicanos who live between two spiritual and cultural worlds.

Gloria Anzaldúa also uses myth to explain identity. In *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), she introduces the idea of a "new mestiza consciousness," which accepts cultural mixing as a strength. By using Aztec myths and figures like Coatlicue, she presents identity as something creative and transforming rather than fixed.

Ana Castillo, in *So Far from God* (1993), combines myth, religion, and magical realism to portray strong Chicana women who face poverty and patriarchy with courage and faith. Similarly, Sandra Cisneros reimagines the myth of La Llorona in *Woman Hollering Creek* (1991), turning a story of sorrow into one of freedom and self-empowerment.

Together, these writers show how myth connects the past with the present. Chicana/o literature presents identity as a living blend of cultures, beliefs, and experiences that continues to grow and change.

Analysis of Key Myths in Chicana/o Literature:

Myths play a central role in Chicana/o literature by helping writers express identity, resistance, and cultural survival. Traditional figures such as La Llorona, La Malinche, La Virgen de Guadalupe, and Indigenous deities are not repeated in their old forms. Instead, they are reshaped to reflect the lived experiences of Chicana/o communities, especially women.

La Llorona, the "Weeping Woman," is often shown in folklore as a ghost who cries for her drowned children and warns people about moral failure. Chicana writers, however, transform her image into one of strength and renewal. In *Woman Hollering Creek* (1991), Sandra Cisneros presents La Llorona as a symbol of voice and freedom. The main character, Cleófilas, escapes an abusive marriage after hearing a woman's powerful cry near the creek. This cry is no longer about sorrow but about liberation. Similarly, Ana Castillo's *So Far from God* (1993) presents La Llorona as a figure of healing and endurance, showing how women survive pain through community support.

La Malinche is another deeply complex mythic figure. Historically labeled a traitor for helping Hernán Cortés, she has been reclaimed by Chicana writers as a symbol of survival and transformation. In *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), Gloria Anzaldúa describes La Malinche as a cultural bridge and the mother of mestizo identity. By reclaiming her story, Chicanas challenge colonial shame and accept their mixed heritage as a source of strength.

La Virgen de Guadalupe also holds great cultural importance. As a blend of the Catholic Virgin Mary and the Indigenous goddess Tonantzin, she represents unity and protection. Chicana feminists reinterpret her as a powerful and active figure rather than a silent one. Writers like Ana Castillo and Anzaldúa view her as a symbol of spiritual resistance and female power.

Rudolfo Anaya's work further blends myth and belief. In *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), Indigenous wisdom and Catholic faith exist together. Through figures like Ultima and the golden carp, Anaya shows that balance and blending are key to understanding identity.

Together, these myths show how Chicana/o literature transforms ancient stories into living symbols of strength, faith, and cultural identity.

Gender, Spirituality, and Resistance in Mythic Narratives:

One of the most powerful parts of Chicana/o literature is how it uses myth to redefine gender and spirituality. In the past, colonial and patriarchal systems used myths like La Malinche and La Llorona to show women as weak, sinful, or submissive. However, modern Chicana writers have reclaimed these figures as symbols of strength, freedom, and independence. Through myth, they show that women's voices and spiritual experiences are central to cultural survival.

Gloria Anzaldúa plays an important role in this transformation. In *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), she introduces the idea of spiritual mestizaje, meaning a mix of Indigenous and modern spiritual beliefs. She argues that true healing comes from connecting with Indigenous roots and rejecting rigid Western religious systems that separate the sacred from everyday life. In her writing, goddesses such as Coatlicue and Coyolxauhqui represent women's pain, renewal, and power to create change. Anzaldúa's spirituality focuses on wholeness and self-acceptance, not guilt or division.

Ana Castillo also combines spirituality and feminism. In *Massacre of the Dreamers* (1994), she develops the theory of Xicanisma, which teaches that reclaiming ancient myths and spiritual traditions helps Chicanas resist cultural assimilation and gender inequality. In her novels, women draw strength from both Indigenous beliefs and Catholic faith, showing that spirituality can unite activism and compassion.

Writers like Sandra Cisneros and Rudolfo Anaya explore spirituality through both female and male perspectives. In *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), Anaya's character Ultima, a healer, teaches that true spirituality includes balance between faith and reason, religion and nature. Her guidance helps the young boy Antonio grow morally and spiritually, learning that divine truth exists in all living things. Through these stories, Chicana/o authors create a decolonial spirituality, a belief system that challenges Western ideas of sin and hierarchy. Instead, it celebrates harmony, community, and respect for the feminine divine. Myths become acts of resistance, helping people reclaim their voices and rebuild identity. By transforming old colonial symbols into sources of power, Chicana/o literature turns spirituality into a tool for justice, healing, and hope.

Modern Reinterpretations of Chicana/o Myths:

In recent years, Chicana/o writers and artists have reworked traditional myths to address modern issues such as borders, gender identity, migration, and care for the environment. These new interpretations show that myth is not something from the past. Instead, it continues to grow and change, connecting ancestral traditions with present-day struggles. One important influence is Gloria Anzaldúa's idea of the *borderlands*. She describes the border not only as a physical space but also as a cultural and emotional one. In this space, people live between languages, cultures, and identities. Later writers like Cherríe Moraga build on this idea. In *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea*, Moraga combines the Greek myth of Medea with the Mexican figure of La Llorona. Through this fusion, she criticizes patriarchy and homophobia and presents a queer Chicana woman who challenges traditional ideas of family and motherhood. Myth is also used to express concern for nature. Rudolfo Anaya's reinterpretation of La Llorona presents her as a spirit who mourns environmental destruction. This version links myth with ecological responsibility and Indigenous respect for the earth. Poets such as Pat Mora and Lorna Dee Cervantes also use mythic images of land, rivers, and deserts to show the deep bond between culture, memory, and nature.

Feminist and queer writers further expand myth's meaning. Figures from Aztec mythology, like Coatlicue, are reclaimed as symbols of strength and transformation. Today, myths also appear in films, digital art, and online activism, reaching global audiences. Through these modern forms, Chicana/o myths continue to inspire resistance, healing, and cultural pride.

Conclusion:

In Chicana/o literature, myth plays an important role in understanding culture, identity, and history. Myth works like a mirror because it reflects the pain, struggles, and strength of the community. At the same time, it acts like a compass by guiding people toward healing, self-knowledge, and cultural pride. Across

generations, Chicana/o writers have reshaped old myths to speak for those whose voices were silenced by colonial rule, patriarchy, and pressure to assimilate. Traditional figures such as La Llorona, La Malinche, and La Virgen de Guadalupe show how Chicana/o writers engage in an ongoing conversation with the past. These figures were once used to control women and enforce social rules. However, modern writers have reclaimed them as symbols of survival, transformation, and resistance. Authors like Gloria Anzaldúa, Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros, and Rudolfo Anaya use myth to challenge oppression and renew spiritual and cultural values. In their works, the personal becomes political, and everyday life is connected with the sacred. Through this process, identity is shown not as something fixed, but as something continuously created. By rewriting myths, Chicana/o writers achieve three important goals. First, they reclaim culture by reconnecting with Indigenous roots and celebrating mestizo identity. Second, they transform myths into tools of resistance, turning once-oppressive symbols into sources of strength and empowerment. Third, they shape new forms of identity that accept diversity, mixed heritage, and multiple ways of being. In the end, myths in Chicana/o literature are not only about the past. They speak to the present and future of the community. By giving ancient stories new meanings, Chicana/o writers keep myth alive as a powerful source of hope, healing, and transformation.

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Decoding Myth and Reality in *The Krishna Key*: A Critical Perspective

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Abstract:

This paper critically examines Ashwin Sanghi's The Krishna Key as a contemporary literary text that negotiates the complex relationship between myth and reality within Indian cultural consciousness. The novel reinterprets the figure of Krishna in Hindu mythology and observes myth into a site of rational inquiry. The study explores how Sanghi represents myth by employing archaeological references, textual allusions, and speculative historiography to blur the boundaries between legendary belief and historical fact. The Krishna Key reflects itself as a source of cultural memory and alternative truths rather than presenting myth as mere fantasy. The paper further analyses the use of the thriller mode as a narrative strategy that enables the decoding of mythic symbols and ancient knowledge for contemporary readers. This paper places The Krishna Key within the framework of myth, culture, and history and shows that Sanghi questions rigid and colonial versions of history. At the same time, he imaginatively re-creates India's mythological past. The study finally suggests that the novel presents myth and reality as closely connected forces that shape cultural identity and meaning in contemporary Indian literature.

Key Words: *myth, thrill, interplay of myth and reality, Mahabharata*

Introduction:

Indian literature is always under the impact of myth, history, and cultural memory. Myths in particular have played a vital role in shaping beliefs, values, and collective identity. In contemporary fiction, writers often revisit these myths and reinterpret them in the light of modern knowledge and rational inquiry. Ralph Harper in his book *The World of Thriller* notes, "Writer consciously uses mythology in the thriller, only decently covering myth in modern dress" (16). Ashwin Sanghi's *The Krishna Key* is a significant example of this trend. Ashwin Sanghi is a renowned modern author of thriller fiction who is often regarded as the "Dan Brown of India." The present novel blends mythology, history, science, and the thriller genre to explore the relevance of ancient narratives in the modern world. *The Krishna Key* reimagines the myth of Krishna not as a distant divine tale but as a living cultural text open to questioning and interpretation. Through clues, codes, and investigations, the novel connects sacred stories with archaeology, history, and scientific reasoning. This approach challenges readers to rethink the boundaries between faith and fact, belief and evidence. Sanghi does not reject mythology; instead, he treats it as a source of hidden knowledge and cultural truth. This paper attempts to study how *The Krishna Key* negotiates the relationship between myth and reality. It examines how the novel questions fixed historical narratives and offers alternative ways of understanding India's past., Sanghi presents myth and reality as interconnected forces rather than opposites as he decodes myth through a modern narrative form. Following is the deeper investigation of the point:

1. A brief story of *The Krishna Key*:

The Krishna Key revolves around Professor Ravi Mohan Saini, a historian who is falsely accused of murdering his childhood friend Anil Varshney, a well-known archaeologist. Varshney had succeeded in decoding the script of the Indus Valley seals, which becomes a crucial clue in the novel. To prove his innocence, Saini begins a journey into the lesser-known and often ignored areas of Indian mythology and history. During his investigation, he uncovers the truth about a serial killer, Taarak Vakil, who believes himself to be Kalki, the final avatar of Lord Vishnu. Saini travels across important historical and mythological sites, from the lost city of Dwarka to a temple in Vrindavan damaged during Aurangzeb's reign. His search focuses on Krishna's lost treasure, the Syamantaka gem, believed to be the philosopher's

stone in alchemy. At the same time, he tries to stop the killer from targeting his friends. The central mystery involves four fragments of an ancient seal held by the descendants of the Yadava clans. Through this quest, the novel blends post-*Mahabharata* history with Krishna's life story, presented alongside the main narrative in a simple yet engaging manner.

2. The blend of mythological past and the reality of the present:

The Krishna Key functions as an exciting thriller that systematically explores ancient secrets of the Vedic age and the *Mahabharata* through a contemporary lens. Ashwin Sanghi has a unique narrative strategy of telling a historical story in contemporary style. Scholars have noted that such blending of myth and thriller "allows ancient belief systems to be re-examined" through suspense and investigation (Eliade 85). In *The Krishna Key*, we experience the fine interplay between the mythological past and a thrilling present. The novel blends these two aspects by interweaving the first-person life story of Lord Krishna with a modern-day murder mystery involving history professor Ravi Mohan Saini. This connection is reinforced by the primary antagonist, Taarak Vakil, who carries out ritualistic killings based on the belief that he is the Kalki avatar, the tenth incarnation of Vishnu. Throughout the search for the historical Krishna, the sources demonstrate how characters use astronomical calculations and archaeological evidence from sites like Dwarka and Kalibangan to validate events from the epic era. Ultimately, the novel seeks to reconcile mythological miracles with scientific explanations, such as exploring if the fabled Syamantaka stone was actually an ancient radioactive element capable of nuclear transmutation.

3. Indian mythology and its symbolic significance in the novel:

The novel provides a deep exposure to Indian Hindu mythology and uses it as a tool to represent thriller aspects of the present day reality. Many ancient mythological references used in the novel bear a scientific logic to make it a hybrid thriller combining a science fiction thriller and mythological thriller. The following mythological symbols are used in the narrative:

3.1 *Syamantaka* stone as a hovering lingam: The fabled *Syamantaka* stone is used to explain the hovering lingam of the Somnath temple by characterizing the stone as an ancient alchemical radioactive variant. According to the theories presented by the character Sir Khan, the stone was not merely a jewel but a source of immense power stored within the hollow interior of the lingam. Sir Khan imagines that the radioactive properties of the *Syamantaka* created a powerful magnetic field that allowed the lingam to hover off the ground. The sources suggest the ancient practice of covering the Somnath lingam in bel leaves was a scientific necessity rather than a purely religious one. As critics suggest, thrillers often thrive on the "gradual decoding of hidden truths, making them an effective medium for revisiting mythological material in modern fiction" (Priestman 2003). Scientific studies depicted in the novel indicate that bel leaves have a radio-protective effect, which would have been required to scavenge and absorb the radiation emitted by the *Syamantaka* stone to make it safe for worshippers to approach.

3.2 Mount Kailash and the present DNA theory: The novel suggests a striking link between ancient DNA and Mount Kailash. It proposes that Lord Krishna's death was not ordinary but part of a planned process to preserve his genetic material. According to character Devendra Chhedi, the injury caused by the hunter Jara allowed the extraction of Krishna's DNA rather than his destruction. This DNA, he argues, was preserved under eternal ice, making Mount Kailash an ideal location. The theory rests on the belief that Vedic civilization possessed advanced knowledge of genetics and biological preservation. Myths and rituals are reinterpreted as symbolic references to cloning and stem cell science. Professor Ravi Mohan Saini further suggests that Mount Kailash is a man-made alchemical pyramid that stores life energy. As the spiritual and cosmic centre of the world, it becomes the perfect site to preserve Krishna's genetic legacy. These reinterpretations assert that "myth and reality are not opposites but interconnected modes of understanding cultural truth" (Campbell 49).

3.3 Mahabharata as Astronomical prediction: The characters in the novel utilize planetary omens mentioned in the *Mahabharata* text itself to establish a historical date for the epic war. Professor Ravi Mohan Saini explains that Sage Vyasa recorded three specific omens on the eve of the battle: a conjunction

of Saturn with Aldebaran, retrograde Mars before reaching Antares, and a lunar eclipse near Pleiades. To find the exact year, the characters refer to the research of Professor Narhari Achar, who used computer simulation software to recreate the night skies as they would have appeared from Kurukshetra at any point in history. While the simulations initially suggested two viable alternatives 3067 BCE and 2183 BCE, Saini notes that 3067 BCE emerges as the unique date when superimposing the fact that Bhishma died in the month of Magha, which occurs after the winter solstice. This astronomical dating is further corroborated in the sources by Greek accounts from Megasthenes, which record Krishna living one hundred and thirty-eight generations before the time of Chandragupta Maurya; using an average of twenty years per generation, the arithmetic ends up at 3067 BCE. Additionally, calculations based on the *Surya Siddhantha*, which dates the beginning of the Kaliyuga to 3102 BCE following Krishna's passing, are used to support the 3067 BCE timeframe for the war.

3.4 The Swastika and Vedic Mathematics:

The novel represents the image of the Swastika, traditionally a symbol of peace and "good existence," in Hindu mythology which is reinterpreted as a mathematical and geographical tool. It is viewed as a quartic plane curve that geometrically represents the flow of four rivers from a single elevated point, specifically marking Mount Kailash. Ashwin Sanghi links the Swastika to a 3x3 magic square where all lines add up to fifteen. This is used to derive the number 108, which the characters interpret as a sacred ratio reflecting the distances and diameters of the sun, moon, and earth. Moreover, 108 is the holy number in Hindu mythology showing 108 beads in the rosery.

3.5 The Brahmastra as a Nuclear Weapon:

The Brahmastra, traditionally known as a divine weapon used in the *Mahabharata*, is interpreted as a historical atomic bomb. Sanghi narrates the contemporary characters who cite descriptions in the *Mausala Parva*, incandescent columns of smoke, hair and nails falling out, and food becoming poisonous—as identical to the after-effects of a nuclear blast. They support this with claims of high radioactivity found in ancient skeletons at Kurukshetra and Mohenjo-Daro.

4. The interplay of myth and reality in *The Krishna Key*:

The Krishna Key functions as a heart-stopping thriller that systematically blurs the boundaries between ancient myth and modern reality. The novel challenges the notion that the *Mahabharata* is merely a collection of stories, instead using computer-simulated astronomy to establish its historicity around 3067 BCE. The novel validates the past through satellite imagery of the Sarasvati river and archaeological evidence of a submerged Dwarka. Myth in *The Krishna Key* represents what Mircea Eliade calls all the primordial events in consequence of which man became what he is today" (Eliade 11) Characters even explore the possibility that advanced genetics and cloning were part of Vedic biological knowledge hidden within ancient rituals. Following are the elements that show this interplay:

4.1 The Kalki Avatar as a modern archetype: The prophecy of the Kalki Avatar, the tenth incarnation of Vishnu, is used as a template for the antagonist's ritualistic murders. The antagonist, Taarak Vakil, mirrors the attributes of Kalki: he breeds horses at a "Sambhala" farm, which is Kalki's predicted birthplace, owns a parrot named Shuka, and uses surgical scalpels initialled "R.M." as a stand-in for the divine sword Ratna Maru. Ultimately, the novel suggests that "the philosopher is more important than the stone," interpreting alchemy not as literal gold-making, but as the internal transformation of the human mind through belief and harmonized energy.

4.2 Mythological Dwarka of Krishna and the present reality: In the novel, Krishna's Dwarka and the present-day city are described as two different points in a historical continuum, separated by five thousand years of rising sea levels and urban decay. Historically known as Dwarawati, meaning the "city of many doors," the original settlement was a magnificent city-state built by the divine architect Vishwakarma on land cultivated from the sea. It was a strategic retreat for the Yadava tribes following repeated attacks on Mathura. This ancient city was actually a cluster of islands extending from Shankhodhara to Okhamadhi, where numerous sea openings allowed ships to enter, justifying its name. It was a mythological city of

unimaginable wealth, featuring palaces, gardens, and a sophisticated passport system where citizens carried three-headed seals depicting a bull, unicorn, and goat for identification. As prophesied, this "Golden City" was submerged by the sea thirty-six years after the Mahabharata war.

The present-day Modern Dwarka is a municipality in the Jamnagar district of Gujarat, struggling with the contemporary challenges of overcrowding, pollution, and traffic. While it is popularly believed to be the seventh incarnation of the original city. The scientific explorations suggest that the ruins located just off the modern coast date back only 3,700 years, roughly 1,300 years too late to be Krishna's Dwarka.

4.3 Mythological places and the concept of Yuga: The concept of time in the novel is defined by a cycle of four Yugas *Satyayuga*, *Tretayuga*, *Dvaparayuga*, and Kaliyuga which represent successive stages of spiritual degeneration. The current Kaliyuga is described as a "Dark Age" that began at midnight on 18 February 3102 BCE following the passing of Lord Krishna. Key mythological realms include Vaikuntha, the celestial abode of Vishnu, and Mount Kailash (also known as Mount Meru), which acts as the Axis Mundi or centre of the universe. Kurukshetra is identified as the historical site of the eighteen-day epic war, while Prabhas Patan (modern Somnath) is noted as the place where Krishna died and where the Somnath temple was historically demolished and reconstructed eight times. Finally, the prophecy of the Kalki avatar centres on the birthplace of Sambhala, which the characters contemporize as the name of a modern-day horse breeding farm.

4.4 Mythological significance of the number "108" and decoding the truth: The characters in Sanghi's *The Krishna Key* utilize the number 108 as a foundational link between ancient Vedic knowledge, mathematics, and geography to validate the scientific sophistication of the past. The thrill is generated as Sanghi manipulates the characters who use the number 108 in their research in the following ways:

4.4.1 Astronomical and Planetary Ratios: The character of Mataji explains that the number represents the 108 steps that the sun and moon take through the sky, derived from dividing the ecliptic into twenty-seven *nakshatras* and four *padas*. She further notes that the distance between the Earth and the Sun is exactly 108 times the Sun's diameter, the distance to the Moon is 108 times the Moon's diameter, and the Sun's diameter is 108 times the Earth's diameter.

4.4.2 Geographical and Architectural Evidence: Professor Saini points out that the unit of measurement used in the ancient city of Dholavira is exactly equal to 108 Lothal *angulas*, reinforcing a shared Vedic mathematical connection. Additionally, Sir Khan notes that the curvature of Mount Kailash's west face is exactly 108 degrees, as is the combined curvature of the north face and its adjoining ridge, suggesting the mountain was shaped by humans.

4.4.3 Geometric and Mathematical Properties: Saini demonstrates that the interior angle of a regular pentagon, a shape he links to the number five at the heart of the Vedic magic square is 108 degrees. He also claims that 108 is the result of multiplying the sequence 11, 22, and 33, which connects to the 1:2:3 ratio found in the uniform dimensions of ancient Vedic bricks.

4.4.4 Reconciling Religious Traditions: Saini deciphers a cryptic clue regarding the number 894 by explaining it is the sum of 108 (the holiest number in Hinduism) and 786 (a sacred number in the Islam of the Indian subcontinent). He argues this represents the union of Hindu and Muslim creative energies embodied in the Taj Mahal.

4.4.5 Cosmological Cycles: The character Priya interprets the individual digits of 108 to represent the singularity (1) from which the universe emerges, the universal egg or *anda* (0), and infinity (8), representing the expansion of the universe in eight directions before it eventually contracts.

4.4.6 Symbolic Power: The central figure Mataji teaches Taarak that 108 is a supreme number because it combines the tenth avatar (Kalki) with the eighth child/avatar (Krishna), and its digits add up to nine, a special number representing wholeness and divinity.

5. Mythology and Thrill:

The mythological aspects in the novel build suspense and thrill. The name of the central character who acts as a serial killer, bears the name Tarak Vakil which nothing but a rearrangement of letters in "Kalki

Avatar." This revelation itself creates thrill. Sanghi narrates many ancient and mythological places along with their connection to the present. In Chapter 23 of the novel, Sanghi introduces various incarnations of Lord Vishnu (Sanghi 97). Each mythological reference has connection to the central story of the present. Sanghi deliberately employs many mythological symbols, images, diagrams, maps and pictures to create a greater thriller impact upon the reader. The image of Vishnu, diagram of prism, pictures of Shankha, Somnath temple, star of David, image of Mace, Mount Kailash, inscription of Sir Khan and Krishna (Sanghi 378), and mystery of Taj Mahal all depict mythological secrets in Hindu, Muslim and Christian mythology.

Thus, the above discussion is not the limit. The novel has many other mythological references intertwined with modern day thriller subject. The references from the ancient epic Mahabharata, the Hindu temples, ancient knowledge, old and mystique inscriptions, mythological mystery and the relationship between past and present make it essential to decode the myths and mythical characters.

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Comparative Analysis of Different Myths in Different Regions of India

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Abstract

India's rich cultural diversity is reflected most profoundly in its mythological traditions, which vary widely across regions while sharing common philosophical foundations. This research article presents a comparative analysis of prominent myths from different regions of India—North, South, East, West, and Northeast—to explore their thematic parallels, narrative structures, and socio-cultural functions. Drawing upon selected myths from texts such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata, regional Puranas, folk epics, and oral traditions, the study examines how geography, language, history, and local belief systems shape mythic representation. The analysis focuses on recurring motifs such as creation, heroism, divine intervention, moral duty (dharma), feminine power, and the relationship between humans and nature. While pan-Indian myths often emphasize cosmic order and ethical universality, regional myths reinterpret these ideas through localized symbols, deities, and narratives, thereby reinforcing regional identity and community values. For instance, variations of the Ramayana in different regions reveal distinct portrayals of characters and moral priorities, while tribal and folk myths foreground ecological harmony and ancestral memory. The study also highlights the role of myths in preserving oral heritage, legitimizing social customs, and transmitting collective knowledge across generations. By comparing myths across regions, the article demonstrates that Indian mythology is not a monolithic tradition but a dynamic and pluralistic system of narratives that accommodates diversity within unity. This comparative approach contributes to a deeper understanding of Indian cultural consciousness and underscores the importance of myth as a living tradition that continues to influence literature, ritual practices, and social thought in contemporary India.

Keywords: *Indian mythology, regional myths, comparative study, cultural diversity, folk traditions, oral narratives, Ramayana variations, socio-cultural values*

A Cultural Studies

From a cultural studies perspective, mythology is not merely a collection of sacred narratives but a powerful cultural discourse through which societies construct meaning, identity, and power relations. In the Indian context, myths operate as symbolic systems that shape social norms, cultural memory, and ideological formations across time and space. Cultural studies emphasizes the analysis of culture as a site of negotiation where dominant, residual, and emergent meanings interact. Indian myths, therefore, can be read as texts that both reinforce and challenge social hierarchies related to caste, gender, region, language, and authority.

India's mythological traditions emerge from a complex interaction between textual authority and lived culture. While classical Sanskrit texts such as the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, and *Puranas* have historically been accorded canonical status, regional, folk, and tribal myths represent subaltern voices that reinterpret, resist, or localize dominant narratives. Cultural studies encourages attention to these marginalized traditions, recognizing myth as a dynamic cultural practice rather than a static religious artifact.

This article situates the comparative analysis of Indian myths within a cultural studies framework, focusing on how myths function as cultural narratives that negotiate regional identity, social values, and power structures. By examining myths across North, South, East, West, and Northeast India, the study highlights how cultural difference, hybridity, and resistance are encoded within mythic traditions. The

objective is not to identify a single "Indian myth" but to explore how multiple mythic voices collectively shape India's plural cultural consciousness.

Myth, Culture, and Meaning: A Cultural Studies Approach

Within cultural studies, myth is understood as a form of cultural text that produces and circulates meaning within society. Drawing on theorists such as Roland Barthes, myth can be seen as a second-order system of signification through which ideology is naturalized and normalized. In the Indian context, myths legitimize social institutions, moral codes, and worldviews by presenting them as timeless and sacred.

Indian mythology operates simultaneously at multiple cultural levels—elite/classical, regional, folk, and tribal. Cultural studies challenges the privileging of textual, Sanskritic myths by foregrounding oral narratives and performance traditions as equally significant cultural expressions. Folk epics, ballads, ritual enactments, and storytelling practices allow communities to reinterpret myth according to local histories and social realities.

From this perspective, mythology becomes a cultural arena where meanings are contested and renegotiated. Myths may reinforce dominant ideologies such as patriarchy or caste hierarchy, but they may also provide spaces for alternative representations, particularly through goddess traditions, Bhakti narratives, and tribal cosmologies. Thus, myth in India functions as a living cultural discourse shaped by historical change and social struggle.

North Indian Myths: Power, Kingship, and Cultural Authority

From a cultural studies viewpoint, North Indian mythology reflects the historical dominance of Sanskritic and court-centered narratives that emphasize kingship, social order, and moral authority. The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* function as cultural master-narratives that construct ideals of masculinity, obedience, and political legitimacy. Rama's portrayal as the ideal ruler naturalizes patriarchal and monarchical values, while Sita's suffering reinforces expectations of feminine virtue and sacrifice.

However, cultural studies also draws attention to popular and folk retellings that complicate these ideals. Regional performances such as Ramlila reinterpret the epic in ways that make it accessible to the masses, transforming elite texts into shared cultural property. These performative traditions allow communities to negotiate moral values in relation to their own social contexts.

Thus, North Indian myths can be read as cultural sites where authority and morality are continuously produced, circulated, and questioned through ritual, performance, and reinterpretation.

South Indian Myths: Bhakti, Emotion, and Cultural Resistance

South Indian mythological traditions offer a powerful example of how regional cultures reshape dominant narratives. Through a cultural studies lens, the Bhakti movement represents a form of cultural resistance against Brahmanical exclusivity by privileging emotion, devotion, and personal experience over ritual hierarchy. Texts such as the *Kamba Ramayanam* transform the epic into a culturally rooted Tamil narrative infused with poetic sensibility and regional identity.

The prominence of Shaivite and Vaishnavite myths reflects a democratization of spirituality, where devotion becomes accessible across caste and class boundaries. Goddess-centered myths further challenge patriarchal norms by foregrounding feminine power as central to cosmic and social balance.

Cultural studies highlights how these myths function as counter-discourses that assert Dravidian identity and regional autonomy while remaining in dialogue with pan-Indian traditions.

Eastern Indian Myths: Shakti, Community, and Cultural Hybridity

Eastern Indian mythology, particularly Shakta traditions, foregrounds the cultural centrality of feminine power. From a cultural studies perspective, goddess worship in Bengal and Odisha represents both religious devotion and cultural expression shaped by history, colonial encounter, and regional aesthetics. Durga Puja, for instance, functions as a cultural festival that merges mythology with art, politics, and community participation.

The cult of Jagannath in Odisha exemplifies cultural hybridity, blending tribal, Buddhist, and Hindu elements. Cultural studies interprets this hybridity as evidence of negotiation between dominant and marginal traditions rather than a fixed religious identity.

These myths underscore how regional cultures adapt and transform mythological narratives to reflect collective values of inclusivity and social cohesion.

Western Indian Myths: Devotion, Heroism, and Social Reform

Western Indian myths reveal a close relationship between mythology and social history. Through a cultural studies lens, the Bhakti traditions of Maharashtra emerge as cultural movements that challenge caste hierarchy and ritual orthodoxy. The Varkari tradition, centered on Vitthal, redefines devotion as an egalitarian cultural practice grounded in collective pilgrimage and song.

Heroic myths from Rajasthan and Gujarat reflect regional values of honor and sacrifice while also functioning as cultural narratives that preserve historical memory. Folk deities such as Khandoba illustrate the blending of pastoral, martial, and devotional cultures, highlighting myth as a site of cultural negotiation.

These traditions demonstrate how myths can serve as tools of social critique and reform within specific regional contexts.

North-Eastern Myths: Orality, Ecology, and Subaltern Culture

North-Eastern Indian myths occupy a crucial place in cultural studies due to their emphasis on orality, ecology, and community-based knowledge systems. These myths challenge text-centric approaches by privileging storytelling, ritual, and collective memory. From a cultural studies perspective, they represent subaltern cultural voices often marginalized in mainstream Indian mythology.

Tribal cosmologies emphasize harmony with nature and ancestral reverence, offering alternative models of spirituality that resist anthropocentric and hierarchical worldviews. These narratives foreground collective ethics rather than individual heroism, expanding the cultural understanding of myth beyond classical paradigms.

Comparative Cultural Themes: Identity, Power, and Difference

A cultural studies-oriented comparison reveals that while Indian myths share common narrative motifs, their cultural meanings vary according to regional power structures and social realities. Myths function as cultural texts that articulate identity, negotiate authority, and respond to historical change.

North Indian myths emphasize political order, South Indian myths privilege emotional devotion, Eastern myths celebrate communal and feminine power, Western myths engage with social reform, and North-Eastern myths foreground ecological and subaltern perspectives. This diversity reflects the plurality of Indian culture and resists any singular or homogenized interpretation of mythology.

Myths in Contemporary Culture: Media, Politics, and Representation

In contemporary India, myths circulate through literature, cinema, television, digital media, and political discourse. Cultural studies examines how mythological narratives are appropriated, reimagined, and sometimes contested in popular culture. Modern retellings question gender roles, reinterpret heroism, and foreground marginalized voices.

At the same time, myths are mobilized within political narratives to construct national identity, making critical cultural analysis essential. Myths thus remain active cultural forces that shape representation, ideology, and public imagination.

Myth as Cultural Discourse

Viewed through the lens of cultural studies, Indian mythology emerges as a dynamic field of cultural discourse rather than a static religious tradition. Myths function as sites where meaning, identity, and power are continuously produced and contested. The comparative regional analysis demonstrates that Indian mythology accommodates diversity, hybridity, and resistance while maintaining shared cultural frameworks.

By foregrounding regional, folk, and tribal narratives alongside classical texts, this study affirms the plural and dialogic nature of Indian culture. A cultural studies approach not only deepens our understanding of mythology but also reveals its enduring relevance in shaping social consciousness and cultural identity in contemporary India.

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Dying as Dreaming: A Mythological Transcendence in Richard Flanagan's *Death of a River Guide*

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Introduction:

Modern Australian literature, particularly since the late twentieth century, has focused on truth telling and presenting a fuller and more complex account of the nation's history and identity. 'Terra Nullius' is a Latin phrase which refers to a land without owner i.e. a place where no native inhabitants exist. The Australian land was proclaimed to be one such place by the European invaders, claiming their own authority over it. This denied the indigenous mass of the land their existence, past, history, as well as culture at all. The false narratives of 'Terra Nullius' are found to be dissected in the contemporary historical narratives of the writers like Richard Flanagan. By narrating the traumatic past post British invasion and forced subjugation of the Australian lands, as well as the brutal conflict between the whites and the aboriginals, the authors directly counter the myths of peaceful settlement framed by the occupiers. In his *Death of a River Guide* (1994), Richard Flanagan uses the aboriginal spiritual mythology as a medium for unveiling the brutal colonial past of Australian islands.

Keywords: Aboriginal, mythology, history, past, convict, vision, death, dreaming, spirits, ancestors etc.

Myths are generally the local stories of grand value that work as a medium for passing down the nation's socio-cultural history and traditions to the following generations. Every culture has its own mythological paraphernalia that elaborates its socio-historical ethos. Mythologies bring humans a consistent reminder of their roots, beliefs, and life patterns. Before the British colonial invasion, hundreds of aboriginal tribes having different languages and cultures inhabited Australian lands. The term 'aborigine' or 'aboriginal denotes the indigenous inhabitants of Australian islands. The aborigines had an immense bond with their land and its nature. Their religion and culture was based on the ideas of animism and totems, both believing the power of nature created by their ancestors. The tribe was spiritually bound to all the natural elements, including animals. And the base of their religious beliefs is their ancient mythology of 'Dreamtime'.

In Australian aboriginal mythology, the 'Dreamtime' is the eternal period of time when the aboriginal ancestral spirits journeyed across the aboriginal land creating the nature, landscape, living species, as well as general laws for the humans to lead their life morally. 'Dreaming' was the period of the creation of the world by the ancestors from far-off, formless places, travelling all over the world so as to keep the life-force on the earth eternal. These ancestors were believed to be immortal as their souls resided in the rocks, waters, animals, birds etc., and their past life was accessible through dreams and visions.

Flanagan, a fantastic Australian writer and artist, blends surreal elements together to access the truths underlying deeper the surfacing facts, either sanitised or overlooked by global historical records. As Flanagan says in one of his interviews, "Fiction is not a lie, but a truth, a fundamental and necessary truth…" (The Guardian, Nov. 2017), his fictional world portrays personal accounts of the characters that entail a massive plethora of global history. His fictional narratives are mostly constructed upon the bedrock of historical facts and examine the truths objectively.

In Death of a River Guide, Flanagan uses aboriginal mythological notions such as 'Dreaming', 'dying' and 'visions' as his narrative tools that take us into the past, present and future of the characters, revealing their brutal past. Flanagan applies the myths of dreaming and visions as a framework to construct his narrative to reassess the colonial history of Australia. The microcosm created in the novel through the protagonist's traumatic familial history projects the deep burred truths of colonial settlements at a macro level.

At the outset of the novel, Aljaz Cosini, the protagonist and a river guide, despite being a skilled professional guide, unfortunately find himself caught in the death trap under water while on a trip. While drowning, he experiences a spiritual awakening that he calls 'visions'. As he nears his death, Aljaz announces that he has been "granted visions" (09), and his mind enters the metaphysical world. His mind wanders around as, like he says, "…the spirits of the sleeping and the dying in the rainforest roam everywhere, see everything…" (09). As per aboriginal spirituality, dying, rather than an end, is believed as a transition into a timeless realm of 'Dreaming'. So, death becomes an active spiritual journey rather than an end to existence. Likewise, the concept of 'vision' resides at the core of 'Dreaming', and refers to a spiritual connection of the living tribe to their ancestral past in the present. Hence, vision, a timeless entity integrating the present and past, is a psychic state that grants a person an access to the history and reality of the ancestors.

Aljaz further asserts that whatever things he is witnessing in his visions "may not be the facts of the newspapers, but they are truths nevertheless" (11). Aljaz is a mixed blood generation born out of two different races: aboriginal and convict (white). Through his visions, he revisits both his ancestral pasts during the colonial period and witnesses their traumatic experiences.

Australia's colonial past had been full of barbarity happened to its natives, and also to the convicts brought to the penal settlements there. Set up as the penal colony in 1788, Australian islands, its flora and fauna soon became an attraction to the British world, and soon it was forcefully subjugated. In between the invasion and the complete subjugation of the land, there was an immense violence happened to the land and its indigenous people.

While commenting on the plight of his aboriginal ancestors Aljaz says,

> "I wonder whether the memory of loss was carried with those who had originally peopled this land. Had it begun with them fighting for the land because, although they knew they belonged to the land, the English had an idea that a single man could own land for his own advancement? Had it begun with this idea of the land not as a source of knowledge but as a source of wealth? (258)

Aljaz, in his vision, witnesses the torture and sexual exploitation of his great great grandmother, Black Pearl, and other aboriginal women by a white sealer. The sealer abducts those women and uses them as slaves. He asserts his white superiority over them calling himself and his white race "made in the image of our Lord" (313), and claims his right to exploit their race, the blacks.

Aljaz further tells that his father's grandmother Auntie Ellie was well aware of the violence done to the aboriginals. She was aware of how her people were denied the authority of their own land, created by their ancestors, and were either killed or thrown out of there to remote islands to die weird deaths. She knew how:

> "…the whites had come for them in the dark…how the mothers stuffed barks into the babies' mouths to stop them crying lest the noise give them away to their hunters, and how because of this the babies sometimes died…how soldiers would keep a black girl tied up all night, then set her free and shoot her running in the morning…how some soldiers roused them from corroboree…and one of them stick an infant on his bayonet and pull it on the fire." (199-200)

Auntie Ellie always tried to hide her identity as an aborigine in order to save herself from being tortured or killed. She carries herself disguised as white: putting a lot of white face powder to cover her dark face, going regularly to church, and following all the white ways of living. While making her grandson Harry, Aljaz father, aware against the dangers of asserting their aboriginal identity, she says, "ya talk like that they'll take ya away, ya understand? They'll take ya back to the islands. I already told you what we are – decent white Catholic folk." (202)

Aljaz watches not just the natives but the land also being destroyed by the colonials. Aljaz sees in his vision the time-

> "…when the English first arrived and the land was fat and full of trees and game…When the English first saw plains so thickly speckled with emu and wallaby…when they first saw the sea and the vast blue Derwent River…pods of whales and schools of dolphin swimming beneath. From that time on…First the emu disappeared, then the tigers, then the many different fishes and seals and whales and their rainbows became rare, then the rivers were stilled under dams, then the trees…" (258)

He watches how:

"…European progress arrives with the mineral boom of the 1880s and 1890s like a vast wave washing over the wilderness, transforming the west coast…the strange flotsam of deflated dreams and broken hopes." (188)

After the bloom of the "short-lived mining towns" (189) was over, they were being deserted like they never existed. The native workers were left without work, hence, without food. Being one of such jobless and penniless victims, Auntie Ellie's husband, like many others, sells all his teeth to a dentist cum trader of dentures. The main business of this dentist was to buy the strong aboriginal teeth for a low amount and trade them out in London for huge amount as there was a great craze for aboriginal dentures in England.

As Aljaz's visions switch between both his ancestral pasts, he witnesses the life of Ned Quade, his paternal grandmother Rose's grandfather. Ned was a convict brought in chains to the Australian penal colony. Aljaz sees him escaping the penal colony of Sarah Island, the notorious British penal settlement for its varied brutal punishments. Ned, along with other convicts, escapes the servitude in order to free themselves from the brutal punishments. On their way to their dreamland, where everyone leads a violence free life, they kill and eat each other and never reach the dream place. They prefer inhuman death to returning to the penal hell which they had left far behind in the hope to get life anew. Aljaz comments,

> "I witness how the most ambitious only sought to escape it, by boat if possible, by death if desperate. I see how many convicts died by their own hand, by the hands of others, by sickness." (259)

Ned's descendants further lead an inferior life as a convict clan in a free settlers' society. Ruth, Rose's brother, while talking to her husband says, "There ain't nobody respects a crawler's kith and kin. And respect is everything. Without respect a man is no better than a dog". (65) They all long for a respectful life and for that, they hide their identity as a convict blood and show up themselves as decent whites. The descendants of the natives and the convicts, as Aljaz remarks, "became service station attendants or shop assistants or lorry drivers or waitresses or clerks, if they were lucky". (260)

Aljaz mourns on the pasts of his aboriginal as well as convict ancestors as he advances further and further in his visions. He turns down all the falsities regarding the formation of the aboriginal land into a nation, the lies that were "told with sufficient force" (260). As Flanagan observes, and his protagonist asserts, "No one spoke …For a century nothing was heard. Even the writers and poets were mute to their own world." (260)

At the end, Aljaz claims of having entered the afterlife and meeting his long dead people. And at last he feels himself transforming into a bird, "…rising with his body, wings outstretched, feathers feeling every sensation of the criss-crossing air currents, rising in spiral…" (326) transcends into an eternal spirit, just like his ancestors.

Concluding Remarks:

In the novel, Flanagan very skilfully uses aboriginal mythical element of vision and Dreaming for unveiling the brutal colonial past of Australia. His narrator protagonist, while experiencing his death, reveals the long buried truths of history as he discovers them in his visions.

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Myths and Truths about *Devrai*

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Abstract

Devrai, the sacred forest is an integral part of a nature. It is protected by the culture over the years. It is identified as the forest preserved for god. Earlier, it was protected out of fear and respect to unknown and mysterious power. It was worshipped religiously by communities. Its value was unknown till the recent time. However, the value of Devrai is an ample if one explores its ecological significance to a society. Its importance lies not only in cherishing the biodiversities in an area but balancing water resources in nature too. Nowadays, it is studied seriously. The present paper aims to explore the mysterious myths and scientific truths associated to Devrai. It also attempts to highlight both-its traditional and cultural significance as well as its scientific and an environmental importance and value in the present scenario.

Key Words*: Devrai, myth, truth, culture, biodiversity, ecology*

Introduction:

Indian culture is basically religious and our festivals are closely connected to nature and its cycle. Thus, a worship to nature is a core of our culture. The Indian mythology and history are the witness that of our culture that cares nature from an ancient time. During an evolution of religion and traditions, there might be a fear or respect for an unknown natural power or there may be mysterious feelings for the same. As a result, the custom of worshipping nature must have been started in a society. Our mythological scriptures like *Rugved, Upnishade* and *Purnas* and an ancient folklore and folk stories have frequently underlined the principle of worshipping the nature around us. We are grown up with the stories of *Lord Krishna* who insisted the people of *Gokul* to worship "*Gowardhan*" than *Lord Indra*. It is because "*Gowardhan*" i. e. a nature is closely connected with their livelihood and lifestyle. It indicates how nature is associated with Indian culture. A worship of tree is a heart of Indian culture. For instance, it is assumed that trees like *Banyan, Pimpal, Kadamb, Audumbar* are worshipped as they are the symbols of *Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu, Lord Kartikey* and *Lord Datta* respectively. As a result, nature is worshipped and respected in our culture. It is said that *Lord Buddha* was born in *Lumbini Rai* and *Bodhivruksha* is also worshipped as the "Tree of Enlightenment." *Saint Tukaram's* famous lines *Vrukshvalli Aamha Soyari Vanchare"* is nothing but our gratitude for nature. There are many shlokas in an ancient scriptures which underline how nature was precious for our ancestors. For instance, Vijay Sambre quotes one of the sholka from Rudhradyay in his article entitled Devrayatil Jaivvaividhya in Saptahik Sakal. He writes:

अश्माचमे मृत्तिकाचमे
गिरयश्यमे पर्वताश्यमे
वनस्पतयश्यमे हिरण्यचमे
अग्नीश्यमे आपश्यमे
ग्राम्याश्यमे पश्वारण्याश्यमे

(Sambre, 28)

(The above sholka means that rocks, stones, soil, mountains, hills etc. gold, fire, water, village, flora and fauna is mine and to cherish it is my individual responsibility.)

In *Atharvved* also there is one sloka which narrate the significance of nature. For instance, Dr. Vinod Shimple refers the quote from Atharvved. He says:

औषधी:पृथिवीमाता दिवं च प्रथयनंत्युत !
तासामोज: प्राणां विश्वमं जीवत्यनुपश्यत !

(Shimpale, 48)

Thus, the nature was an integral and core part of human life. It is worshipped with belief and our scriptures, mythology closely connected to nature.

What is Myth and Truth?

The Greek word 'mythos' means a story or plot, may be true or false. Its modern meaning is a myth is a one story in a mythology, a system of heredity stories which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group. An anonymous story deeply rooted in primitive folk beliefs, presenting supernatural episodes to explain natural events and phenomena. Myths have less historical background and more cultural setting. They are the product of cultural or community group rather than the creation of an individual. On the contrary, truth is conformity to facts or accordance with reality. It is often understood as a property of statements or beliefs that present the world as it is. Truth contrasts with falsehood or falsity, which encompasses misrepresentations that do not meet this standard and fail to align with reality.

What is Devrai?

Devrai is a cultural heritage of any society and community. It is named after god which believes in worshipping god in a form of nature. Devrai, the sacred forest has always been the topic of attraction for researchers. Earlier. Devrais are explored only by botanists with the intention to survey the biodiversity there. However, nowadays, the study of Devrai has become a topic of multidisciplinary as various branches of knowledge-anthropologists, sociology, culture, environmentalists, botanists, zoologists are interested to know its value from their perspective in the present scenario. Thus, the study of Devrai encompasses not only flora and fauna there but local culture and communities there too. The concept of Devrai is deeply rooted in Indian culture without knowing its importance and value to environment. It is always found in natural forest which is treated a religious and holy place. Devrai includes the natural elements like nature, leaves, fruits, flowers, birds, insects, warms, soil, rock, stone, water and other elements like temples, archeological ruins and structured on non-structured idols of deities too. Though Devrai is found all over India, they are extremely located in Himachal, Maharashtra and Kerala. It is known by the different names in different areas as *devrahati, devvan, devban devpan* etc. Devrai is Marathi word which means "god's forest" and in English it is called "sacred grooves". It is protected by local communities based on traditional beliefs. These groves serve as vital ecological hotspots due to associated myths and practices that historically prevented human interference. A strong cultural and spiritual belief that forms the basis of Devrai's protection.

Myths And Truths about Devrai:

In cultural context, Devrai, the sacred groves carries certain myths in a community. However, scientifically it is proved that they are useful and valuable. As far as the aspects like Protection, Purpose, Biodiversity, Water Resources and Environment Management are concerned, there are certain myths and truth come across counter to each other. They are as follows:

Protection:

The belief system surrounding Devrai often seen as myths. The first and the most important belief is that Devrai is considered the "God's Own Forest" and is protected by a local deity. As Devrai is seen in a particular area only, it is given the status of religiousness. Consequently, Devrai is protected through beliefs and deities in Devrais are worshipped out of fear and respect. It is widely believed that it is protected by local one or more deities. These deities are structured or unstructured stone idols, spirits, forest gods (*Vanya Devta*) etc. Sometimes it is assumed that it resides in the grove or sometimes embodied in trees or animals. These deities are worshipped as an extreme standard symbol of prosperity and creativity. A strong belief is that harming or altering the ecology without the deity's permission will result in a curse or misfortune for the individual or community. As there was a threat of divine punishment by the deity, noone dares to disturb

Devrai. This is the grass root reason that these forests remained undisturbed and untouched. Moreover, it is strictly prohibited to take resources from the Devrai, including fruit, twigs, dead wood, or even flowers, except under specific ritual circumstances. It is considered that it is always open to sky, it is not covered by anything. It does not have a physical fencing but a religious and sacred fencing. It is preserved because it is protected by the religious norms and cultural wall.

In fact, Devrai is a traditional method of protecting environment. It is also treated as the last destination of various animals. It is significant to note here that the region in which Devrai is protected, the highest and an enriched biodiversities are found in the surrounding. As Devrais are protected culturally and naturally, a climax ecosystem is found there. It is proved scientifically that wherever Devrai is rooted, the natural resources are in an extreme enriched condition. For instance, weather, rainfall, soil erosion, medicinal plants etc. Dense forests of Devrai are the best for secretion of oxygen rather they can be labeled as the best " Oxygen Parks" in the present scenario. The dense forest use maximum solar energy through which photosynthesis process is done effectively. Consequently, it generates biomass at high level. As Devrai is protected from the human interruption, it is valuable in every context. As they are the best for water resources, some rare species of plants, trees, birds and animals are found only in Devrai. These rare species need to be protected; rather they need to be used to generate the new "hybrid seed". Thus, Devrai need to be treated as " Gene Bank" for the healthy and specific seed.

Purpose:

In an ancient time, the purpose of worshipping Devrai was exclusively religious which intend to please the deities there and get blessed. However, today its religious purpose shifted to scientific. Nowadays, its purpose is to preserve biodiversity and water resources.

Water Sources:

Another myth about Devrai is that the deities within the Devrai supply water for natural springs and wells within and around the grove. It is strongly believed that its continuous flow is nothing but the blessing of the deities. Yet, the truth is that the dense forest of Devrai covers an enriched root systems within the grove which helps for soil and water conservation. It has been observed that it increases an atmospheric humidity, reduces temperature and maintain the local water table which often make them the only water source for the village during summer.

Biodiversity:

The forest is sacred due to the presence of specific powerful spirits or gods residing in the trees. The fact is that Devrai is untouched and undisturbed from human interferences, they grew in plentiful. As a result, nowadays, Devrais have proved significant ecological hotspots with abundant flora and fauna, serving as benchmarks of less disturbed vegetation and maintaining the local ecological balance.

Management:

Traditionally, the area of Devrai is managed through age-old religious rituals and community traditions handed down through generations. Consequently, this socio-ecological philosophy functions as an informal conservation at grand level, often more effective than government forest department efforts in preserving critical biodiversity corridors.

Medicinal Value of Devrai:

As far as medicinal plants are concerned, they are found plentiful in Devrai. The rare medicinal plants which are used in making ayurveda medicines are found only in Devrai. For instance, *Hirda, Beheda, Triphala, Amla, Shatawari, Neem, Gulvel, Wild Litchi etc. These medicines are widely used in* skin diseases, respiratory issues, digestive disorders and fractures. Some of the trees, bushes and climbers are used in making cosmetics, toothpastes, soaps and perfumes. However, the truth is that Devrais, enriched in medicinal plants, nowadays, are on a verge of degradation. Despite their importance, many *Devrais* are threatened by urbanization, encroachment, shifting agricultural practices, and sometimes, over-exploitation of resources.

Threat to Devrai:

Though, Devrais represent a unique, traditional method of conservation where spiritual belief ("myths") ensures the protection of the environment ("facts"). However, due to an urge of development and

changing cultural, traditional, and religious beliefs, many of these sacred groves are currently facing degradation and extinction.

Significance of Devrai in the Present Scenario:

Today, changing weather scenario and degradation of biodiversity alert us the need of conservation of forests in the form of Devrai for the sustainable development. In fact, it should be protected as heritage places and an inspirational connector between human beings and nature. Unless our cultural roots are strong, we can not grow far. Our environmental roots-Devrai should be strong to sustain ourselves in the materialistic chaos and competition. While facing the upcoming natural calamities and challenges, one needs to concentrate on Devrai as the last hope of our survival.

Devrai is known for its distinguished biodiversities. Nowadays, its significance, contribution and value is known to everyone. Everyone is aware of the fact that Devrai is identified as traditional and cultural heritage and natural treasure of the nation. As Devrai is protected as a holy place, it remained undisturbed. Thus, it prohibits human intervention to spoil the nature.

Conclusion:

"Devrai", sacred groves are the patches of forest conserved by traditional religious beliefs by local communities. Out of the respect and fear, they are protected. However, they are the best examples of forest conservation. Its significance in the present scenario is worth to note as they serve as vital ecological hotspots and natural sanctuaries. Nowadays, it is the need of the time to conserve these areas through community participation. Moreover, they should be recognized as "Biodiversity Heritage Sites"**.** The overall analysis states that the myth that deities dwell in Devrai and they protect the Same. However, this myth itself signifies the truth that god dwells not only in temple but also its existence can be experienced in nature too in the form of Devrai. Thus, as far as Devrai is concerned, the myth itself turns into a remarkable truth highlighting the fact that god is everywhere and He protect us.

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Reflection of Myths and Realities in Girish Karnad's Nagamaṇḍala

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Abstract:

Girish Karnad's Nagamandala is a significant work in modern Indian drama that explores the complex relationship between myth and reality within a traditional social framework. Drawing upon Indian folklore and oral storytelling traditions, the play employs mythology as a medium to expose social injustice, gender discrimination, and the instability of socially constructed truth. This research paper examines how myths operate not as escapist fantasies but as tools of revelation and transformation. By analyzing the symbolic use of the serpent, the portrayal of marriage, and the role of tradition and cultural authority, the study highlights how Karnad redefines truth beyond rigid moral codes. The paper argues that Nagamandala uses myth to critique reality and to imagine possibilities of personal and social change within a culturally rooted context.

Key Words: *myths, reality, mythology, tradition, culture, truth, transformation, morality.*

1. Introduction:

Indian literature has long relied on myths, legends, and folklore to convey moral, social, and philosophical ideas. In modern Indian English drama, myths have gained renewed importance as instruments for reinterpreting contemporary issues. Girish Karnad stands out among modern dramatists for his creative engagement with traditional narratives. His plays combine folk elements with modern sensibilities, allowing ancient stories to speak to present-day concerns.

The play based on Kannada folk tales but is structured as a modern play that questions patriarchal values, marital norms, and the meaning of truth. Karnad does not merely retell myths; he reshapes them to expose contradictions in social reality. The interaction between myth and reality forms the central dramatic tension of the play.

This paper aims to study how *Nagamandala* reflects myths and realities simultaneously and how mythology becomes a vehicle for transformation. The analysis focuses on themes of tradition, culture, gender relations, and the shifting nature of truth.

2. Myth and Mythology:

Mythology in Indian culture is not limited to religious belief; it is deeply embedded in everyday life, rituals, and moral thinking. Myths often provide symbolic explanations for social behaviour and human emotions. In literature, myths function as narrative structures that allow writers to address sensitive issues indirectly.

In *Nagamaṇḍala*, Karnad uses mythology as a flexible and dynamic force. The serpent (Naga), a sacred figure in Indian mythological tradition, symbolizes fertility, desire, regeneration, and divine power. Unlike conventional myths where divine beings remain distant, Karnad brings the Naga into domestic life, making myth inseparable from reality.

By doing so, Karnad challenges the assumption that myth belongs only to the past. Instead, he presents myth as a living presence that continues to shape social attitudes and personal experiences.

3. Folk Tradition and Narrative Technique:

One of the unique features of *Nagamandala* is its folk narrative structure. The play begins with a framing device involving a storyteller and personified flames, which reflects the oral storytelling tradition of

rural India. This technique establishes an atmosphere where the boundary between the real and the unreal is deliberately blurred.

Folk tales often contain magical elements that represent psychological or emotional truths. Karnad uses this narrative freedom to explore taboo subjects such as female desire and marital dissatisfaction. The folk form allows him to bypass strict realism and present uncomfortable realities in symbolic form.

Thus, the folk tradition becomes a cultural space where suppressed voices—especially those of women—can be expressed.

4. Reality of Marriage and Patriarchal Society:

The realistic dimension of *Nagamandala* reveals the unequal structure of traditional marriage. Rani's relationship with her husband Appanna reflects a system where male authority is dominant and unquestioned. Appanna treats Rani as property rather than as a companion, locking her inside the house and denying her emotional connection.

While Appanna openly maintains a relationship with another woman, society does not condemn him. However, Rani is subjected to suspicion and public trial based on mere accusation. This double standard highlights the gender bias embedded in social reality.

Karnad presents this reality without romance. Rani's suffering represents the silent endurance expected of women within patriarchal culture.

5. Myth as an Alternative Reality:

The entry of the Naga into Rani's life introduces an alternative reality that contrasts sharply with her everyday existence. The Naga, taking the form of Appanna, offers Rani affection, attention, and emotional fulfillment. Although this relationship is mythical, it provides what social reality denies her.

This alternative reality questions the legitimacy of social morality. The mythical lover behaves more ethically than the real husband. Karnad thus reverses conventional moral hierarchies, suggesting that emotional truth may exist outside legal and social institutions.

Myth becomes a corrective force that exposes the emotional emptiness of accepted reality.

6. Tradition, Culture, and Social Authority:

Tradition and culture play a decisive role in shaping the moral framework of the play. Village elders, rituals, and beliefs claim to uphold social order. However, Karnad reveals how tradition often serves power rather than justice. The trial by ordeal imposed on Rani demonstrates the cruelty hidden within cultural practices. Her survival is interpreted not through rational inquiry but through divine sanction. Ironically, the same culture that threatens her life transforms her into a sacred figure after the ordeal.

This contradiction exposes the unstable foundation of social authority and the selective interpretation of tradition.

7. Truth and Moral Ambiguity:

Nagamandala challenges the idea that truth is singular and absolute. The play presents multiple versions of truth—social truth, emotional truth, and mythical truth. Rani's fidelity cannot be judged solely by social norms because her lived experience defies simple moral categories.

Karnad suggests that truth is not merely factual but experiential. Rani's happiness and emotional growth, though achieved through a mythical relationship, are real and meaningful. The play questions whether society's definition of truth genuinely reflects human dignity.

8. Transformation of Identity:

Transformation is a central theme of *Nagamaṇḍala*. Rani undergoes a gradual change from a timid, obedient wife into a self-aware individual. This transformation does not involve rebellion against culture but reinterpretation of it.

After the ordeal, Rani gains social authority and confidence. Interestingly, Appanna also changes. He accepts Rani with respect and responsibility, indicating that transformation is possible within traditional structures when power relations are challenged.

Myth thus acts as a catalyst for personal and social transformation.

9. Feminist Perspective:

From a feminist perspective, Nagamandala highlights the limited choices available to women in patriarchal societies. Rani's empowerment occurs not through social reform but through myth, suggesting the absence of real-world justice for women.

However, Karnad does not portray Rani as a passive victim. Her emotional awakening and self-recognition mark a subtle yet powerful form of resistance. The play critiques patriarchy without rejecting cultural roots, offering a nuanced feminist vision.

10. Myth versus Modern Rationality:

In a modern context, myth is often dismissed as irrational. Karnad challenges this view by showing that rational social systems can be emotionally unjust, while myth can offer ethical insight. The play does not advocate blind belief but highlights the limitations of purely rational morality.

By blending myth with realism, Karnad creates a dramatic space where alternative truths can exist and be examined critically.

11. Conclusion:

Nagamandala is a profound exploration of the interaction between myth and reality. Girish Karnad uses mythology not as escapism but as a critical lens to examine tradition, culture, gender relations, and the nature of truth. The play exposes the emotional inadequacy of social reality while affirming the transformative potential of myth.

Through symbolic narrative and folk tradition, Karnad reimagines mythology as a living force capable of challenging injustice and enabling self-realisation. Nagamandalaremains a relevant and powerful text that demonstrates how myths can reflect, question, and transform reality in meaningful ways.

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From Mythic Order to Lived Truth: Ambedkar, Narrative Authority, and the Cultural Politics of Caste

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Abstract

Myth operates not merely as a collection of ancient stories but as a powerful cultural narrative system that produces meaning, authority, and social legitimacy. Within the Indian socio-cultural context, myth has functioned as a foundational mechanism through which caste hierarchy has been normalised and sustained as an unquestionable social "truth." Scriptural narratives and ritual traditions have historically transformed social inequality into a divinely sanctioned order, thereby obscuring ethical reasoning and silencing lived experiences of oppression (Ambedkar, 1936/2014; Kumar, 2010). This paper examines caste as a mythic social order and explores Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's critical intervention as a disruption of this narrative authority.

The central argument of the study is that Ambedkar's engagement with caste is not limited to political reform or constitutional thought but constitutes a profound narrative challenge to myth itself. By interrogating religious texts, exposing the moral contradictions embedded within Brahmanical traditions, and foregrounding the experiential reality of the oppressed, Ambedkar redefines truth as ethical, rational, and grounded in lived experience rather than inherited belief (Roy, 2020; Ramakrishnan & Pallavi, 2023). His writings destabilise myth as an epistemic foundation and reposition literature and culture as spaces of critical resistance.

Keywords :Myth; Caste; Narrative Authority; Lived Truth; Ambedkar; Cultural Discourse

Introduction

Myth occupies a central place in the formation of cultural consciousness, functioning not merely as a body of inherited stories but as a system through which societies organise meaning, authority, and social order. In many cultural contexts, myths operate as normative frameworks that naturalise power relations, transform historical practices into moral certainties, and legitimise inequality by presenting it as inevitable or divinely ordained. In India, the caste system represents one of the most enduring examples of such mythic ordering, where social hierarchy has been sustained not only through material practices but through narratives embedded in religion, tradition, and collective memory (Ambedkar, 1936/2014; Kumar, 2010). These narratives have historically converted social stratification into "truth," rendering caste both unquestionable and resistant to ethical scrutiny.

The mythic foundations of caste are deeply intertwined with scriptural authority and ritual practices that portray hierarchy as natural, sacred, and timeless. Through repetition and cultural transmission, these narratives acquire epistemic power, shaping how individuals understand identity, duty, purity, and social belonging. As a result, caste functions not merely as a social institution but as a narrative structure that governs perception itself. This mythic order suppresses alternative truths, particularly the lived experiences of those positioned at the margins of society. The suffering, exclusion, and humiliation endured by Dalits are systematically rendered invisible or morally justified through appeals to tradition and religious sanction (Roy, 2020).

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar emerges as one of the most significant thinkers to challenge this mythic authority at its very foundation. While Ambedkar is often examined primarily as a constitutional architect, social reformer, or political leader, such readings risk limiting the depth of his intellectual intervention.

Ambedkar's engagement with caste extends beyond legal or institutional critique; it represents a fundamental challenge to the narratives that sustain social hierarchy. By critically interrogating religious texts, questioning the moral legitimacy of inherited traditions, and foregrounding the experiential reality of oppression, Ambedkar destabilises myth as a source of unquestionable truth (Ambedkar, 1936/2014; Kumar, 2010). His critique exposes how myths function as instruments of power rather than neutral carriers of cultural wisdom.

Central to Ambedkar's thought is the redefinition of truth itself. Against scriptural and traditional authority, he asserts the primacy of lived experience, ethical reasoning, and rational inquiry. For Ambedkar, truth is not derived from antiquity or divine sanction but from the concrete realities of human suffering and dignity. This shift represents a narrative rupture: a movement from mythic order to lived truth. By privileging experience over inherited belief, Ambedkar challenges the epistemological foundations of caste and opens new possibilities for understanding justice, equality, and social responsibility (Ramakrishnan & Pallavi, 2023).

This paper argues that Ambedkar's intervention can be productively read as a disruption of narrative authority within Indian culture. Rather than viewing his writings solely through political or sociological lenses, the study situates them within a cultural-literary framework that emphasises myth, narrative power, and truth production. Such a perspective allows for a deeper understanding of how caste operates as a story society tells itself and how Ambedkar seeks to rewrite that story by exposing its ethical contradictions and human costs. Literature, culture, and philosophical discourse thus become crucial sites where myth is contested and alternative truths are articulated.

The present study addresses a significant gap in existing scholarship. While extensive work has been done on Ambedkar's political philosophy, educational thought, and legal contributions, relatively less attention has been paid to his role as a narrative disruptor who challenges the cultural logic of myth itself. By bringing together discussions of myth, lived experience, and narrative authority, this paper seeks to offer a nuanced interpretation of Ambedkar's thought that resonates with contemporary debates on caste, culture, and social justice.

The paper is structured as follows: the next section outlines the conceptual framework linking myth, truth, and narrative authority; this is followed by a review of relevant literature. The study then presents its research questions, objectives, and methodology before engaging in a detailed analysis of caste as a mythic order and Ambedkar's challenge to it. The paper concludes by reflecting on the contemporary relevance of re-reading myth critically in the pursuit of a more just cultural imagination.

Myth as Cultural Structure

Myth functions as a cultural structure that organises belief, legitimises social arrangements, and stabilises power relations over time. Beyond its popular understanding as symbolic or imaginative storytelling, myth operates as a framework through which societies naturalise hierarchy and transform historical practices into moral inevitabilities. In the Indian context, religious and social myths have played a crucial role in sustaining caste by presenting it as sacred, timeless, and beyond human intervention (Ambedkar, 1936/2014; Kumar, 2010). This distinction between myth as narrative story and myth as social order is critical. While stories may invite interpretation, myth as social order demands obedience, embedding hierarchy within ritual, tradition, and everyday life. As a result, caste persists not only through coercion but through belief systems that make inequality appear normal and justified.

Truth as Lived Experience

Truth, within mythic systems, is often defined doctrinally—derived from scriptures, traditions, and inherited authority. Such doctrinal truth prioritises textual sanctity over human reality and often dismisses suffering as either deserved or divinely ordained. In contrast, experiential truth emerges from lived conditions, social realities, and ethical awareness. Dalit lived experience exposes the violence, exclusion, and humiliation concealed beneath mythic representations of harmony and order. Scholars have argued that this experiential truth cannot be adequately captured within dominant postcolonial or pluralist frameworks that celebrate cultural difference without confronting structural oppression (Roy, 2020). Ambedkar foregrounds

lived experience as an epistemic resource, asserting that truth must be grounded in human dignity rather than metaphysical justification. In doing so, experiential truth functions as a counter-narrative that challenges mythic legitimacy.

Narrative Authority

Narrative authority refers to the power to define what counts as truth, morality, and knowledge within a culture. Texts, scriptures, and traditions function as narrative authorities when they regulate interpretation and silence dissenting voices. In the caste system, Brahmanical texts and ritual practices have historically exercised this authority, controlling access to knowledge and legitimising exclusion (Ramakrishnan & Pallavi, 2023). Ambedkar's intervention directly challenges this authority by subjecting sacred texts to rational critique and ethical evaluation. Rather than accepting inherited narratives as inviolable, he exposes their historical construction and moral contradictions. Through this challenge, Ambedkar disrupts the monopoly of narrative authority and reclaims truth as a human, ethical, and socially accountable concept.

Review of Literature

Ambedkar on Education, Caste, and Social Consciousness

Scholarly engagement with Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's thought consistently foregrounds education as a central instrument of social emancipation. Ambedkar conceptualised education not merely as a means of economic mobility but as a transformative force capable of cultivating self-respect, critical consciousness, and ethical awareness among the oppressed (Ambedkar, 1936/2014; Mandal, 2023). Several studies highlight his insistence that education must dismantle inherited hierarchies rather than reproduce them through exclusionary knowledge systems. Ambedkar's critique of Brahmanical control over education exposes how knowledge itself becomes a mechanism of domination when access is restricted and intellectual authority is monopolised (Kumar, 2010). Scholars note that his rejection of traditional Hindu educational frameworks was grounded in their role in sustaining caste-based inequality rather than promoting universal human development (Rastogi et al., 2024). Thus, Ambedkar's educational philosophy is inseparable from his broader challenge to the cultural logic of caste.

Postcolonial and Dalit Perspectives on Experience

Postcolonial scholarship has frequently emphasised plurality, hybridity, and multiple lifeworlds as alternatives to Eurocentric historical narratives. However, critics argue that such frameworks often fail to adequately address caste as a structure of material and epistemic violence. Roy (2020) contends that postcolonial emphasis on plurality can obscure Dalit lived experience by reducing oppression to cultural difference rather than structural injustice. Dalit perspectives foreground experience as a source of truth that resists abstraction and irony. This body of work insists that caste cannot be understood merely as a symbolic identity but must be examined through embodied suffering, social exclusion, and historical humiliation. Ambedkar's thought is frequently positioned within this tradition, as he articulates experience not as anecdotal evidence but as an epistemological challenge to dominant knowledge systems (Kumar, 2010).

Contemporary Literary Readings of Ambedkar

Recent literary and cultural studies have moved beyond biographical and political readings of Ambedkar to explore his writings through semiotic, narrative, and cultural frameworks. Ramakrishnan and Pallavi (2023) analyse *Annihilation of Caste* as a text that functions simultaneously as social critique and symbolic intervention, highlighting how language, metaphor, and signification shape social reality. Such readings reveal Ambedkar's engagement with narrative power and textual authority. However, despite these advances, existing scholarship tends to focus either on caste as social reality or on Ambedkar as political thinker, leaving the relationship between myth, truth, and narrative authority under-theorised.

Research Gap

While significant scholarship exists on Ambedkar's educational philosophy, lived experience, and textual strategies, limited attention has been given to examining caste as a mythic narrative system and Ambedkar's role in disrupting its truth-claims. This study addresses this gap by integrating myth, lived truth, and narrative authority within a cultural-literary framework.

Research Questions

1. How does myth operate as a cultural narrative system that legitimises and sustains caste hierarchy in Indian society?
2. In what ways does Dr. B. R. Ambedkar challenge mythic authority by foregrounding lived experience as a source of truth?
3. How can Ambedkar's writings be interpreted as a narrative intervention that disrupts cultural authority, rather than merely as political or reformist critique?

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine myth as a cultural narrative system that produces and legitimises social "truth" within the caste structure.
2. To analyse Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's critique of caste as a challenge to dominant narrative authority rooted in religious and cultural traditions.
3. To reinterpret Ambedkar's thought within a literary–cultural framework that foregrounds narrative, meaning-making, and experiential truth rather than purely political or legal perspectives.

Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative and interpretative research methodology grounded in the traditions of humanities scholarship. Rather than relying on empirical or statistical data, the research focuses on close reading, conceptual analysis, and critical interpretation to examine the relationship between myth, truth, and narrative authority within Ambedkarite discourse. This approach is particularly suitable for analysing cultural narratives and ideological structures that operate through texts, symbols, and collective beliefs rather than measurable variables.

The primary method employed is textual analysis of selected writings of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, including *Annihilation of Caste* and related speeches and essays. These texts are examined to identify how mythic authority is constructed, sustained, and challenged through language, argumentation, and ethical reasoning. Attention is given to Ambedkar's use of critique, rational inquiry, and experiential reference as strategies for disrupting inherited narratives.

The study further draws on cultural and literary hermeneutics to interpret caste not merely as a social institution but as a narrative system embedded in religious, historical, and cultural discourse. Hermeneutic analysis enables an examination of how meaning is produced, contested, and re-signified within texts and traditions. Secondary sources, including scholarly works on caste, myth, Dalit experience, and Ambedkar's philosophy, are used to provide theoretical grounding and contextual support for the analysis.

As a humanities-based inquiry, the study does not employ fieldwork, surveys, or interviews. Its focus remains on interpretative depth, conceptual clarity, and critical engagement with texts, making it appropriate for exploring ideological and cultural dimensions of caste and resistance.

Analysis & Discussion

Caste as Mythic Order

Caste in Indian society operates not only as a social arrangement but as a mythic order sustained through scriptural sanction and cultural repetition. Religious texts, ritual codes, and traditional narratives have historically presented caste hierarchy as divinely ordained and morally necessary. This mythic framing transforms historically produced inequalities into natural and eternal truths, thereby shielding them from ethical critique (Ambedkar, 1936/2014; Kumar, 2010). Through this process, hierarchy is not experienced as injustice but as destiny. The mythic order of caste thus functions by normalising graded inequality and embedding it within everyday practices, language, and social relations. By converting social power into sacred legitimacy, myth ensures the internalisation of hierarchy even among those who suffer from it.

The naturalisation of caste hierarchy is achieved through repetition and ritual rather than coercion alone. Myth works subtly, shaping perception and belief so that inequality appears reasonable and resistance

seems transgressive. In this sense, caste persists as a cultural narrative that governs how society understands purity, duty, and social worth, rather than merely as a system enforced by law or violence.

Ambedkar and the Disruption of Myth

Ambedkar's intervention represents a decisive rupture within this mythic order. His critique of caste is grounded in rational inquiry, ethical reasoning, and historical analysis, all of which challenge the authority of inherited narratives. By subjecting sacred texts to logical scrutiny, Ambedkar exposes the moral contradictions and social consequences concealed beneath religious justifications (Ambedkar, 1936/2014). This rational critique undermines the belief that mythic authority is beyond questioning.

Equally significant is Ambedkar's ethical resistance to caste. He rejects the notion that tradition possesses inherent moral legitimacy and insists that ethical evaluation must be grounded in justice, equality, and human dignity. In doing so, Ambedkar reframes morality as a human responsibility rather than a scriptural inheritance. His rejection of inherited narratives is not an act of cultural negation but an assertion of ethical autonomy. As Kumar (2010) argues, Ambedkar's reading of religious tradition seeks not reform from within myth but liberation from its oppressive logic.

From Myth to Lived Truth

The most radical aspect of Ambedkar's challenge lies in his elevation of lived experience as an epistemic authority. Against doctrinal truth derived from scripture, Ambedkar foregrounds the experiential reality of Dalits as a legitimate source of knowledge. Suffering, humiliation, and exclusion become sites of truth that reveal the violence masked by mythic harmony (Roy, 2020). This shift represents a movement from myth-based truth to lived truth.

Dalit experience functions as a counter-narrative that exposes the gap between moral claims of tradition and social reality. Truth, in Ambedkar's framework, is grounded not in sacred texts but in human consequences. As contemporary literary readings suggest, this reorientation transforms culture and literature into spaces where myth is contested and ethical truth is articulated (Ramakrishnan & Pallavi, 2023). Through this transition, Ambedkar dismantles narrative authority and reclaims truth as experiential, ethical, and socially accountable.

Findings

The analysis reveals that myth functions as a form of cultural power rather than as a neutral system of belief. By operating through religious narratives, ritual practices, and inherited traditions, myth legitimises caste hierarchy and transforms historically produced inequality into accepted social "truth." This cultural power sustains caste not merely through coercion but by shaping perception, morality, and collective consciousness.

The study further finds that Ambedkar fundamentally redefines the nature of truth by displacing scriptural and doctrinal authority with ethical reasoning and lived experience. His critique demonstrates that truth cannot be derived from tradition alone but must be evaluated through its consequences on human dignity, equality, and social justice. In foregrounding experience, particularly Dalit experience, Ambedkar establishes an alternative epistemic framework grounded in suffering, resistance, and ethical accountability.

Another key finding is that narrative authority plays a decisive role in both sustaining and dismantling caste. Control over texts, traditions, and interpretive power enables dominant groups to define social reality and silence counter-voices. Ambedkar's intervention exposes this monopoly of meaning and challenges the legitimacy of inherited narratives by subjecting them to rational and moral scrutiny.

Finally, the study highlights that literature and culture emerge as crucial sites of resistance where myth can be interrogated and alternative truths articulated. Through critical reading, reinterpretation, and narrative disruption, cultural discourse becomes a space for challenging oppressive structures and reimagining social relations beyond mythic hierarchy.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its literary–cultural re-reading of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's thought beyond dominant political, legal, or sociological frameworks. By positioning Ambedkar as a critic of narrative authority and mythic truth, the study offers a fresh interpretative lens that foregrounds culture,

language, and meaning-making in the analysis of caste. This approach contributes to humanities scholarship by extending discussions of myth and truth into the domain of social hierarchy and lived experience.

The study also advances the broader myth–truth discourse within the humanities by demonstrating how myths function as cultural mechanisms that legitimise inequality rather than as neutral cultural inheritances. By integrating lived experience and ethical reasoning into the analysis of myth, the research highlights the importance of narrative critique in dismantling oppressive belief systems.

Finally, the study is relevant to contemporary cultural debates on caste, as mythic narratives continue to influence social attitudes and practices in modern India. By encouraging critical engagement with inherited traditions and cultural texts, the research underscores the ongoing relevance of Ambedkar's thought in reimagining justice, equality, and ethical responsibility in present-day society.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited by its reliance on textual and interpretative analysis, as it does not incorporate empirical data or quantitative methods. The analysis is primarily focused on selected writings of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and related scholarly interpretations, which may limit the scope of perspectives examined. While this focus allows for depth in conceptual and cultural analysis, it does not account for the full diversity of contemporary lived experiences across different social contexts. Additionally, the study does not employ field-based, ethnographic, or interview-based methods, which could have provided further insight into the present-day manifestations of caste and cultural narratives. Consequently, the findings are intended to contribute to theoretical and cultural understanding rather than to offer empirical generalisations.

Conclusion

This study has examined the enduring tension between myth and truth within the cultural framework of caste, demonstrating how myth functions as a powerful narrative system that legitimises social hierarchy and normalises inequality. Rather than operating as harmless tradition, myth emerges as a cultural force that shapes perception, morality, and social order by transforming historically produced structures into unquestioned truths. The analysis reveals that caste persists not only through material practices but through narrative authority that regulates belief and silences alternative realities.

Within this context, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's intellectual intervention assumes critical narrative significance. His critique of caste extends beyond political reform or constitutional advocacy to challenge the very stories through which society understands legitimacy, morality, and truth. By interrogating religious texts, rejecting inherited authority, and foregrounding lived experience, Ambedkar disrupts mythic order and redefines truth as ethical, rational, and grounded in human consequences. His writings function as a narrative rupture that exposes the gap between cultural ideals and social realities.

The study underscores the continuing relevance of Ambedkar's thought in contemporary cultural contexts where mythic narratives continue to influence social attitudes and practices. In an era marked by renewed appeals to tradition and identity, Ambedkar's insistence on ethical scrutiny and experiential truth offers a vital framework for critical engagement. The paper concludes by suggesting that myths must be re-read not as immutable cultural inheritances but as narratives open to questioning, reinterpretation, and moral evaluation. Such critical re-reading is essential for dismantling oppressive structures and for imagining a more just and humane cultural order.

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A Study of Retellings, Adaptations and Myth Revisions in the Context of Indian Literature in English

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Abstract:

An exploration of new perspectives through the conservation and transmission of cultural heritage helps to narrow down the gulf between the past and the future. The present research paper explores and studies the vibrant Indian English literary reflections to understand diverse ancient narratives for changing paradigms of social, political and cultural sectors. The research paper also discusses how multiple Indian mythical voices and whispers can be brought to light through retellings, adaptations and revisions in the age of technology. Indian epics can be retold, adapted, and revised in different contexts and times.

***Key words**: Myth revision, retelling, adaptation, conservation, transmission, cultural heritage, ancient narratives, Indian mythical voices and whispers.*

Introduction:

For breathing new life into ancient stories, the retelling, adaptation and revision of myths play a key role especially in the context of new generations. Retellings, adaptations, and myth revisions play a crucial role to conserve and understand one's cultural heritage and help to ensure cultural continuity of mythical stories and make stories relevant to contemporary era. They are also useful to shape our social understanding, know the exploration of new dimension and inspire further retelling, adaptation and revision of myths. Besides, they help to reinterpret literature based on the myths for the modern generations.

Importance of Retellings, Adaptations and Myth Revisions:

Relevance of past in the myths and present of the existing era helps to explore and reflect the contemporary social, political or cultural issues. In order to bridge the gap between the past and the present, the retellings, adaptations, and myth revisions permit writers to review, deconstruct, or reconstruct narratives of myths. It is also the duty of acquainting the current generation with the myths through new dimensions of literature.

Key Terms or Concepts: In view of the research paper, the major concepts are elucidated as follows:

1. **Retelling:** The term in the context of old stories refers to a process of reimaging a myth or ancient story.(Merriam-Webster, 2025) There are many forms of retelling. Here, the resonance with the contemporary issues through the reimaging of the myth or ancient stories helps to explore new dimensions or perspectives for new generations.
2. **Adaptation**: The term refers to the process and medium of reimagining a myth through the required modifications or changes including updating the setting or contexts, transforming the medium (language), or shifting the standpoints or perspectives. (Oxford reference, 2025)
3. **Re-visions**: The term refers to the process of offering new perspectives, views through the reflection and contemplation of social, political or cultural contexts. It also encompasses the justice to subaltern and challenging the roots. Adrienne Rich defines it as "the act of looking back […] of entering an old text from a new critical direction."(Goodread, 2025)

Major Indian Writers:

Many Indian writers such as Amish Tripathi, Kavita Kane, Anand Neelakantan, Devdutt Pattanaik, Ashwin Sanghi, Raja Rao, Ashok Banker have penned beautiful pieces of narratives based on Indian myths.

Reflections of Retellings, Adaptations and Myth Revisions in Indian English Literature:

Many Indian writers such as Amish Tripathi, Kavita Kane, Anand Neelakantan, Devdutt Pattanaik, Ashwin Sanghi, Raja Rao, Ashok Banker, etc. have attempted to retell, adapt and revise Indian mythology. The research paper studies the reflection of Retellings, Adaptations and Myth Revisions in Devdutt Pattanaik's 'Ramayana', Dharamvir Bharati's 'Andha Yug: The Blind Age' and Kavita Kane's 'Lanka's Princess'.

1. **Retelling in Devdutt Pattanaik's 'Ramayana'**:

   Retellings are very dominant in Indian English literature. Indian mythology plays a crucial role in the modern and postmodern Indian literature. The Ramayana, one of the greatest epics of India, has diverse tales and interpretations. Devdutt Pattanaik's attempts to retell the epic and lays a special emphasis on many oral, visual and written retellings composed in different settings, times, composters.

   Though there is diversity in the retellings, the quintessence of the epic remains the same. The book primarily retells the character of Sita as a Sita-centric narrative. The book challenges the traditional male-dominated attitude by portraying her as a self-aware individual as "Sita's father never knew of the world […] Sita's mother never knew the world […] But Sita realized she knew both. This is how the mind expands, she thought to herself."(Pattanaik, 38) or "Everyone was stunned by the realization that Sita was Gauri who was also Kali. […] She had allowed herself to be rescued. She was the independent Goddess who had made Ram the dependable God."(Pattanaik, 28) In brief, the book offers a unique and multi-layered perspective on the ancient epic by shifting the narrative focus from the Lord Shri Rama to Sita.

2. **Adaptation in Dharamvir Bharati's 'Andha Yug: The Blind Age'**:

   Epics are always retold, adapted, and revised in different contexts and times. A post-partition play entitled 'Andha Yug: The Blind Age'(translated by Alok Bhalla) is "a visual translation"(Bala, 336) and a literary adaptation of the canonical verse play 'Andha Yug'(1953), originally written in Hindi by Dharamvir Bharati. The play "pays careful attention to the ethical dilemmas and inner contradictions of the characters."(Bala, 335) The play focuses on the philosophical ideas rooted in the myths such as "Truth resides in the acts we perform... The meaning of man's existence lies in the actions he performs."(Bharati, 58-59).

   The original play uses the final day of the Mahabharata war as an allegory for the moral chaos, social collapse, spiritual blindness, loss of humanity witnessed during the partition of India in the August, 1947. The literary adaptation "Bhalla's version seems to be more accessible to a reader unfamiliar with the Mahabharata."(Bala, 335) In the adaptation, there is no considerable update or change in settings, characters, and themes but it prominently addresses contemporary issues through the lens of timeless narratives.

3. **Myth Revisions in Kavita Kane's *Lanka's Princess***:

   Kavita Kane's *Lanka's Princess* revises as well as revisits a part of the epic *Ramayana*. The novel revises the male-dominated and patriarchal society rooted in the myths by lending a feminist implication to the subaltern character of Surpanaka (Meenakshi) and subverting her benign and ugly identity disfigured in Valmiki's epic *Ramayana*. The novel is the story of "Surpanakha, born Meenakshi with beautiful, fish-shaped eyes, struggles to carve out her identity beneath the overshadowing legacies of her powerful brothers."(Kane, 03)

   The revisionist approach to Kavita Kane's 'Lanka's Princess' explores subversion of patriarchal culture, loss of humanity as well as justice to benign and ignored character in the Indian epic *Ramayana*. The novel revises the predominantly patriarchal discourse which has marginalized the woman character, the unheard or subaltern voice of Surpanaka. She proves to be an assertive and challenges the patriarchal and androcentric viewpoints. When Ravana plots murder of Vidyutjihva, (Surpanaka's husband), she attempts to seek revenge and says "My revenge would be my respite."(Kane, 175)

Conclusion:

In essence, the present study explores that in the process of retellings, adaptation and myth revision, the essence of myths remains intact even if the imaginative narratives are changed. In order to narrow down the gulf between the generations, the retellings, adaptation and myth revision play a crucial role. The select literary works reveal that a vibrant engagement with ancient narratives explores contemporary socio-political issues, socio-cultural voices and whispers and serve as vehicles for conservation and transmission. The reflection of myths in the select literary texts challenges the existing one-sided narratives as well as helps to explore new meanings relevant to contemporary life.

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From Enchantress to Protagonist: Narrative Authority and Feminist Revision in Madeline Miller's *Circe.*

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Abstract:

Madeline Miller's 2018 novel Circe reimagines the life of the minor goddess Circe who is Greek mythology's one of the most enigmatic female figures. This paper examines how Miller transforms Circe from a peripheral character in Homer's Odyssey where she is primarily defined by her dangerous sexuality and magical powers to a complex protagonist. In Madeline Miller novel Circe is provided with an agency, interiority and a compelling narrative arc. This paper through the close textual analysis will explore Miller's feminist reinterpretation across several aspects like Circe's humanization through psychological depth and emotional vulnerability and her exploration of female marginalization and isolation in patriarchal divine society. This paper will also shed a light on how classical narratives have historically silenced or demonized powerful women. Through the retelling of the myth Miller aims to recover the women's voices from classical mythology and ask readers to reconsider ancient stories through a modern feminist lens. By centring Circe's perspective and expanding her story beyond her brief appearance in the Homeric epic, Miller not only fills narrative gaps in the original myth but also reshapes the reader's understanding of power, monstrosity and female autonomy in both ancient and contemporary contexts.

Keywords*: Feminist Re-tellings, marginalization, vulnerability, classical mythology.*

Introduction.

Greek mythology has long functioned as a reservoir of narratives that define Western literary and cultural imagination. Among these, Homer's *Odyssey* stands as one of the most enduring with its tale of Odysseus' long journey home from Troy. Withing this epic, however, many characters especially female figures play marginal roles and receive limited narrative agency. Circe, the sorceress who turns Odysseus' men into pigs is one such figure. Homer represents her as a seductive obstacle in Odysseus's path where she remains framed largely through the perspective of male heroes. Madeline Miller's Circe offers a radical re-centring of this figure. By giving voice, interiority and historical continuity to Circe from her origins as an awkward divine daughter of Helios to her exile on Aiaia and eventual encounters with heroes and gods, Miller transforms what was a peripheral myth into a sweeping, humanized narrative.

The Classical Circe: Dangerous Femininity in Homer.

To understand Miller's intervention, we must first understand the Circe character of classical tradition. In Homer's Odyssey, Circe appears as a dread goddess who dwells alone on the island of Aiaia and who transforms Odysseus's men into pigs when they arrive at her palace. The episode follows a familiar pattern in the Odyssey where the male hero encounters a dangerous female figure whose power threatens to derail his homecoming, overcomes threat through superior cunning or divine assistance and ultimately subordinates the woman to his purpose. Odysseus who was equipped with the magical herb moly, resists Circe's potion and forces her to restore his men. She submits, swears not to harm him and becomes his lover. Odysseus and his crew remain on Aiaia for a year, enjoying Circe's hospitality before she provides crucial advice for his continued journey, including instructions for reaching the underworld. Her role, ultimately, is that of the helpful woman—her powers domesticated and channelled to serve the hero's quest.

Classical and subsequent interpretations of Circe have typically emphasized her dangerous sexuality and her association with transformation and monstrosity. She represents the perils of feminine enchantment, the threat that powerful women pose to male autonomy and rationality. is limited portrayal stems partly from the nature of Homeric epic, which privileges action over introspection and constructs characters primarily through their deeds and speeches in public contexts. Female characters, excluded from the martial and

political spheres that constitute the epic's central concerns, appear primarily in domestic settings or as supernatural obstacles. Circe's isolation on Aiaia, her lack of family or community ties in Homer's account, and her association with transgressive magic all position her as an outsider whose perspective the narrative neither requires nor provides.

Miller's Circe: Constructing Interiority and Biography

The childhood section, entirely Miller's invention, proves crucial for establishing Circe's character and the novel's thematic concerns. Young Circe experiences bullying from her siblings, indifference from her parents, and a profound loneliness that shapes her development. Her voice becomes a site of particular shame and difference, described as "thin and reedy" like a mortal's rather than possessing the golden quality expected of gods. This detail, seemingly minor, resonates throughout the novel as Miller explores voice, speech, and narrative authority. Circe's voice marks her as different, lesser, unworthy of attention in divine society—a condition that mirrors how mythology itself has silenced or distorted her story.

Miller's Circe discovers her magical abilities not through birthright but through desperate experimentation, transforming her romantic rival Scylla into a monster in an act of jealous rage. This episode, drawn from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* rather than Homer, becomes in Miller's hands a moment of both empowerment and horror. Circe discovers she possesses *pharmaka*—the power to transform living things through herbs and incantations—a skill that makes her both dangerous and valuable. When the gods learn of her powers, she threatens their order; Zeus cannot allow such wild magic to exist unchecked among them. Her punishment is exile to Aiaia.

The exile Miller portrays differs markedly from Homer's presentation. Rather than a dread goddess in her palace, Miller's Circe arrives at Aiaia as a frightened young woman, uncertain of her powers and unprepared for solitude. Her development of the palace, her magical practice, and her formidable reputation all occur gradually over centuries. Miller traces this development with careful attention to psychological realism, showing how isolation, repeated betrayals, and the need for self-protection transform Circe into the figure Odysseus will eventually encounter.

This biographical approach accomplishes several things simultaneously. It contextualizes Circe's actions within a coherent character arc rather than presenting them as arbitrary or inherently monstrous. It demonstrates how marginalization and trauma shape behavior and choices. It fills the enormous temporal gaps in the classical narrative—what did Circe do for the centuries or millennia before Odysseus arrived? And perhaps most significantly, it insists that Circe's story exists independently of the male hero whose brief intersection with her life has historically defined her entire existence.

Exile and Female Community

The theme of exile proves central to Miller's novel and her feminist project. Circe's banishment to Aiaia punishes her for possessing power that threatens patriarchal divine order, but it also liberates her from the toxic social dynamics of her father's halls. On Aiaia, Circe must construct her own identity and values rather than conforming to or being defined by others' expectations.

Miller carefully depicts the double-edged nature of this exile. Initially, solitude terrifies Circe, who has never been alone and possesses no skills for survival. Her gradual mastery of her environment—learning to gather herbs, studying their properties, developing her magical craft, and eventually creating the palace and menagerie that Homer describes—represents a journey toward self-sufficiency and self-knowledge. The island becomes a space where she can escape the hierarchy and cruelty of Olympus, develop her abilities without male oversight or restriction, and ultimately choose her own path.

However, Miller never romanticizes this isolation. Circe's loneliness persists as a constant ache throughout the novel. She craves connection, conversation, touch—the fundamental human (or divine) need for community that exile denies her. When visitors arrive—whether gods seeking her powers, mortals shipwrecked on her shores, or sailors like Odysseus and his crew—Circe must navigate complex dynamics of power, trust, and vulnerability.

Motherhood and Choice

Miller makes Circe's pregnancy with Telegonus and her subsequent parenting central to the novel's second half. This choice serves multiple purposes. It grounds Circe's story in bodily, material experience rather than allowing her to remain purely abstract or archetypal. It explores how women's lives are shaped by reproductive capacity and maternal responsibility in ways that men's lives are not. And it provides Miller with opportunities to examine the tensions between individual autonomy and relational obligation.

Circe's experience of pregnancy and childbirth is portrayed with unflinching physical detail. As an immortal unused to physical suffering, she finds the experience transformative in ways that extend beyond the metaphorical. The vulnerability of pregnancy, the pain of childbirth, and the consuming demands of infant care all challenge Circe's self-sufficiency and control in ways that prove both frustrating and meaningful.

Her relationship with Telegonus develops into the novel's emotional core. Circe's fierce protective love for her son drives many of her decisions, but Miller avoids sentimentalizing motherhood. Circe struggles with the limitations that childrearing imposes, resents the ways that motherhood makes her vulnerable, and must learn to allow Telegonus his own autonomy and mistakes. When Telegonus expresses desire to seek out his father, Circe must confront her own fears and possessiveness, ultimately choosing to support his journey even as it terrifies her.

The Ending: Choosing Mortality

Miller's most controversial intervention in the Circe myth comes in the novel's conclusion, when Circe chooses to relinquish her immortality and become mortal. This ending, entirely Miller's invention, has sparked considerable critical debate. Some readers celebrate it as the culmination of Circe's journey toward authentic selfhood, while others question whether trading immortal power for mortal limitation truly represents empowerment or whether it simply confirms traditional narratives that female power must be renounced to achieve happiness.

Within the novel's logic, Circe's choice makes thematic sense. Throughout the narrative, Miller has associated immortality with stagnation, cruelty, and disconnection from meaningful consequence. The gods, secure in their permanence, treat mortals as playthings and one another with casual brutality. Circe's long life has taught her to value change, growth, and the intensity of experience that comes from acknowledging finitude.

Her choice is framed not as submission but as self-determination. Throughout her life, others have sought to control or define Circe—her father, Zeus, the various men who have attempted to dominate her. By choosing mortality, she claims ultimate authority over her own existence, determining its terms and its ending. She chooses to live among mortals, to age and eventually die, in community with Penelope, Telegonus, and others she loves.

Conclusion

Madeline Miller's *Circe* represents a significant achievement in feminist mythological revision. By centering a character traditionally relegated to the margins of epic narrative, Miller challenges readers to reconsider not only Circe's story but the entire apparatus through which classical mythology has been transmitted and interpreted. Her novel demonstrates how narrative perspective shapes meaning, how context alters interpretation, and how stories that have seemed complete and definitive can be opened to reveal previously unconsidered possibilities.

Miller's interventions operate at multiple levels. She constructs psychological depth and biographical coherence for a character who existed previously as an archetypal function. She recontextualizes Circe's actions within social and political circumstances that render them comprehensible and even sympathetic rather than arbitrary or monstrous. She challenges the male-centered perspective of epic tradition, insisting that women's stories matter independently of their relationships to heroes. And she uses Circe's story to explore contemporary questions about power, autonomy, voice, and the price women pay for self-determination.

Miller's Circe is neither a straightforward victim nor a simple villain but a complex individual shaped by circumstances, capable of both mistakes and growth, deserving of the narrative attention and moral consideration traditionally reserved for male characters. In telling her story, Miller not only recovers Circe from the margins of mythology but also demonstrates the ongoing relevance and power of classical stories when approached with fresh perspectives and contemporary concerns.

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Myths As Living Narratives And Their Contemporary Relevance And Reinterpretation

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Abstract

Myths are traditional fictional narratives that are sacred or imaginary tales, or distinguished as misconceptions that are passed down from generation to generation. These are used to structure one's beliefs, emotions, dos and don'ts, and dilemmas that are still relevant in present times. Myths are referred to as living narratives because even after ages and decades, some of the myths are still followed, while some are modified in the context of today's world. Myths, somewhere, also hold prestige. Myths are usually connected with religion; people who believe in myths are said to have certain religious beliefs. In the contemporary world, these myths are retold or reinterpreted in the context of the beliefs of society. Myths appear in literature, films, and newspaper articles. Many Indian writers like Chitra Banerjee and Amit Tripathi have rewritten the mythological stories from epics like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, stating their usefulness in contemporary society. This paper studies such literary texts and cultural examples using qualitative and analytical methods. It shows the relevance and influence of myths in the present society, which shows that myths are considered a guide that helps in moral development and helps understand society. The paper concludes that myth influences the past to the present. It still has existence as it evolves and fits the contemporary world.

Keywords: *Myths, Epics, Contemporary, Reinterpretation, Mythology*

Introduction

Myths have evolved from ancient times to the contemporary and have always been a part of human life. Earlier myths were used to associate with things that were happening in and around nature and the surroundings. Such as natural calamities, life cycle - birth and death, happiness, and sufferings that are usually associated with karma or past life doings. These were passed from one generation to another, which helps shape human values, ways of thinking and how to behave. These were all before the development of science.

But with the development of science, people started believing in science and started thinking nationally. People believed that myths are nothing but just imaginary stories that are passed down and have no base or proof, and have no significant meaning. Whereas contemporary writers believed that myths are not meant to be taken literally. According to modern writers, myths express deeper emotional and psychological truths. Myths reflect human fears and moral conflicts.

While in consideration of Indian contexts, myths are still strongly believed by the people. The depiction of myths can be seen in films, newspaper articles, cultural and religious beliefs, TV serials, books, etc. Indian epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata are still read and discussed by people, as this text deals with matters of human life like duty to be carried out as men and women; it also has the context of relationships, power, justice, and weakness of human beings. This paper explores myths as a living narrative and tries to understand why they are still relevant in contemporary society.

Review of Literature

Myths and their functions in society have been studied by many scholars. Carl Jung is one who explored myth from the perspective of psychology and introduced the concept of the collective unconscious. According to Carl Jung, myth has some universal symbols, like "hero" and "mother," which appear across cultures and reflect shared human experiences.

Joseph Campbell argued that all myth has a universal structure, the monomyth.

Mircea Eliade views myth as the spiritual side of myths and their role in connecting humans with cosmic and spiritual realities.

Research Methodology

This paper explores the study of myths using qualitative and analytical methodology. The study is carried out by analysing texts written by Indian writers and interpretive readings of mythological stories and their modern retellings. Secondary sources such as books, journals, and critical essays are used. This study is descriptive and interpretative, that aims to explore the cultural, ethical, and psychological importance of myths rather than depending on quantitative data. This methodology helps a deeper study of how myths function as living narratives and how the reinterpretation of texts makes myths still relevant in contemporary society.

Moral and Ethical Guides

Most Indian myths show moral complexity; they do not directly say what is right or wrong. Instead, they show moral conflicts and it provides moral and ethical guidance. In epics like the Mahabharata, Krishna and Karna faced moral and ethical difficulties where their decisions were questioned. In Ramayana also where Rama's loyalty to dharma also illustrates ideal moral conduct. Similarly, in modern times, people face such problems; though it does not impose any rigid rules, it is still relevant today.

Reinterpretation of myths in contemporary literature

Many modern Indian writers have retold myths in a way that would suit the needs or address the issues that are happening in the present times. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni retells the story of Draupadi's struggle and emotions in the Palace of Illusions. It also challenges male-centred narratives. Amish Tripathi has depicted gods as human figures where dilemmas and actions are taken, and consequences are faced. These show that myths are flexible and adapt to changing social needs.

Myths in Popular Culture

Myths in India are influenced by popular TV serials, newspapers, articles, films, and digital platforms. In India, a film hero's role is inspired by a mythical story. This shows widespread acceptance of myth, narrative power and emotional appeal.

Findings

The analysis shows that myths are culturally significant; their flexible nature allows them to be reinterpreted in present times according to the needs of society. It helps shape human values and ways of thinking as it provides moral and ethical guidance. It also discusses the impact of myth on the everyday activities of humans and its presence in popular culture, like books, films, journals, and TV serials. Myth continues to preserve cultural values while allowing changes.

Significance of the Study

The study is important because it encourages critical thinking in the context of myths rather than blind trust and acceptance, which is still relevant for modern readers, students and scholars. The study is useful because it considers myth as living narratives, helping in shaping human life, culture and providing moral and ethical guidance. The study opposes the notion that myths are outdated or irrelevant.

Conclusion

The study concludes that myths are not outdated narratives, but they are still relevant. They are living narratives that are kept alive by literature, media, newspaper articles, journals, films and TV serials because of their flexible nature; they accommodate growth and change along with human society, which ensures their continued relevance in the contemporary world.

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Myths in the Poetry of A. K. Ramanujan

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One of the significant themes treated by the post-Independence poets is the assertion of the Indianness. They use the means of religion, philosophical concepts, mythological stories, history and references to Indian cities, places, and events for their expression. Ramanujan, an expatriate, finds himself strongly connected to his motherland, India.

Though Ramanujan has handled the religious life very sympathetically, he is harsh towards some of its evil practices under the name of religion. He has portrayed the picture of an orthodox Hindu Brahmin family with all its virtues and vices. He has accepted that his interest, his unconscious intention had been to diversify the notions of Indian civilization to take it away from the purely Brahmanical view of Indian civilization. In his opinion, the Brahmanical view is a hierarchical one. In *Speaking of Siva*, one finds it more democratic. It is fiercely critical of Hindu positions of ritual and the priest, the privilege of temples and the rich man who support the temples; of the whole caste system (Interview 2: 2001-55). He thought that being a Brahmin was a privilege for him to react against it (Interview 2: 2001: 61)

In *The Striders*, he presents the basic concepts in Hinduism as a thesis; in *Relations* and *Second Sight*, he criticizes the superstitions, evil practices and misconceptions about it for others and in *The Black Hen*, there is a synthesis of the concepts and re-presentation through proper elaboration of mythological stories, references along with presentation of some of the views of other religions like Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism and Muslim.

'The Striders' compares the capacity of Indian prophets to walk on water just like the water bug slides on the surface of the water. In Indian Hindu philosophy a human being can acquire the divine ability to walk on the surface of water only after the penance for cycles of twelve years. In 'Anxiety', he refers to the elements of the body fire-water-earth-air and the fifth 'sky' having infinity is like the anxiety. The same concept is continued in 'Hindu to his Body' and 'Towards Simplicity'. He elaborates the Hindu concept of human body being one with nature and the Hindu ritual of Cremation after death which reunites the elements with the (Str: CP: 33) soil. 'Christmas' also stresses the similar theme of oneness of nature and human world saying-

"For a moment, I no
longer know
leaf from parrot
or branch from root
nor, for that matter,
that tree
from you or me"

'*Relations'* presents the continuation of some of the themes from '*The Striders'* and some poems criticize the outdated rituals, misinterpretations of Hindu concepts. For the purpose of satire, he uses the word 'Hindoo' not the regular word 'Hindu' which is further continued in '*Second Sight'*. In these collections, he also extends his remarks to other religions such as 'Christian, Muslim, Jain, and Buddhist'.

There are three 'Hindoo' poems, namely 'The HINDOO: he doesn't hurt a fly or a spider either', 'The HINDOO: he reads his GITA and is calm at all events' and 'THE HINDOO: the only risk'.

He speaks of the theory of rebirth from Gita which makes a soul undertake a journey through sixty-four 'yonis' including the lives of insects, birds, animals and the human being. The 'Hindoo' doesn't hurt a fly or a spider because he is afraid that the insect can be his great-grandmother, 'true ancestor' or the Great

Grandfather who is a part of family tree when the true ancestor is not. Then, he ironically presents the 'calmness' of 'the Hindoo' who reads 'his' GITA. The concept of 'Sthitaprajna is criticized in the poem, as the narrator 'come(s) unstuck/ and stand apart'. He does not marvel when he sees good and evil. He knows how women are tortured under the name of marriage, but he takes care not to gloat. He can look at wounds calmly, and even the lovemaking at public places. But, he is not able to remain unstuck and feels bothered when he sees innocence suffering-(Rel: 79)

'Yet when I meet on a little boy's face
The prehistoric yellow eyes of a goat
I choke for ancient hands are at my throat'

The same scenario is continued in the poem 'The HIDOO: the only risk'. He consciously keeps himself away from the 'neighbour's striptease', 'friends suicide', to keep one's hand away from knife that may carve wife or child, the itch to take a peek at the dead street–dog'. According to 'Hindu' philosophy one should not interfere with others' lives which are resultant of their 'Karma' in post lives. In Hinduism, the death should be normal and natural so, he carefully tries-(Rel: 90)

'… not to be caught
dead at sea, battle, riot, adultery or hate-
nor between the rollers of a giant lathe"

It means that he has not to involve himself in any social riot even for justice, not to fight any battle for welfare and not to love outside the marriage bonds though he really feels it from his heart as it will be labeled as an act of adultery and not hate in marriage though they do not love each other only because these cases may lead to unnatural death. But keeping away from these heartfelt events is the risk of heartlessness. These customs and rituals are leading modern man towards heartlessness instead of keeping him alive from within.

Though, the irony is self-criticizing, it doesn't mean that Ramanujan himself was an outsider or an alienated being. Obviously, he has commented on outdated rituals, static representation of the religion not as an outsider but a total insider. He looks at them from within.

This ironic view represented by the word 'Hindoo' is again brought to the surface in the title poem 'Second Sight', which is placed in the end of the collection. In it, he comments on the sarcastic remark of a foreigner when they enter the dark passage in Pascal's endless queue who says-

'You are a Hindoo, aren't you?
You must have a second sight".

As an answer to it, he wants to reassert that he doesn't have or wish to have the supernatural power and is satisfied with the first sight and five senses. It has been repeated in his 'Prayers to Lord Murugan'-(Rel: CP: 116)

'Lord of sixth sense,
Give us back
Our five senses'

This poem is remarkable as Ramanujan has pointed out the estrangement of the modern man from true religion. He prays to the ancient Dravidian god of fertility, joy, youth, beauty, war and love who represents the six faced god with twelve hands. He comments on his embarrassing appearance in the beginning in first two parts and thereafter prays for various missing aspects in modern life in a true sense. He expects a natural, real red flower to bloom in the blueprint city. He wishes the god to replace/ exchange the pointed grey pottery for iron copper, the yellow grass for the leap of stone horses, lily seed for ram's flesh and scarlet rice for the carnivals of rivers. He also expresses helplessness for the lost glory of Rajahs who 'stand in photographs' and have lost the stimulus of the 'life' which has turned into cowardice. He reminds the readers that India has rich and glorious past which provides evidence of the ivory, the apes and the peacocks supplied to Solomon in the Bible. India has primeval proofs of medicines for smallpox and similes for muslin. When the astronauts are rehearsing to reach the moon, Indians reached the sky by awakening the

'Kundalini' 'through the sky behind/ the navel' In the modern age, man has lost his identify or face, so, he requests the god- "Lord / of faces, / find us face / we lost early / this morning"

Further, he mentions that the man should be helped by Him to reach the small prints instead of only 'headlines'. He does not want to live a life entangled with the unknown past, Sanskrit, connected to the authority given to some elites who rule even today, the mythologies of night and also several roundtable mornings of London representing pre-Independence period. He wishes to regain the future based on realities. He wants to be born with a new identity. And to conclude the poem, he prays god not to let him stray aimlessly, and hunt him down at a particular time. He wishes that (Rel: CP: 117)

"Lord of answers,
cure us at once
of prayers"

In his opinion, praying is a kind of weakness, asking something which he cannot fulfill. So, the Lord Murugan should answer all his desires and make him live a happy and self-dependent life.

The charges against Ramanujan for being an outsider, alienated from Hinduism cannot stand, as he has pinpointed the nexus of the true Hinduism. He has prayed god in the true sense of a prayer. It reminds one of prayer by Rabindranath Tagore, 'Where the mind is without fear and head is held high'

Rabindranath Tagore has prayed for the country to awaken in the heaven of freedom and live a life of dignity and honour which was the lost in pre-Independence period. In the modern period where man has lost his identity and his capacity to be one with surrounding, Ramanujan prays to give the face back and (Rel: CP:113)

"Lord of solutions,
teach us to dissolve
and not to drown"

Ramanujan's prayer is the prayer of a modern man suffocated in the chaos of confusions.

Second Sight also makes significant remarks about religion. He refers to the elements of composition and his travel through them towards infinity just like (Elements of Composition: SS: CP: 123)

"*Caterpillar on a leaf, eating*
being eaten"

In this poem, he refers to the ritual of 'Muharram tigers' which is performed with tiger-skin the *Pulikali* in Kerala (the tiger dance). It is celebrated to mourn the death of Husayn ibn Ali, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad. The intention behind it is to get closer to the Lord. Ramanujan mentions it to ascertain man's endless desire to be one with the God.

The similar statement is continued in the poem 'Questions'(SS:CP:130) in which he refers to the sloka 3.1.1. from Mundaka Upanishada which is-

"Two birds on the selfsame tree:
One of them eats the fruit of the tree,
The other watches without eating".

The poem begins with the last lines of the 'Elements of Composition'.(SS: CP: 123)
In a way, this poem continues the thought

"Eating, being eaten,
parts of me watch, parts of me burn,
rarely clear blue flame
without sputtering of questions:
why now, why here, why the Down's
Syndrome."

The first part of the poem states his status of mind that does not propose any questions and the second part is another question raised against the realization of the meaning of that sloka.

The reason, the meaning of the *sloka* from Mundaka Upanishada is as follows: The bird, eating the fruit and the other bird, watching its eating are two perpetual friends- Jiva and Iswara. These are compared to

birds living on a single tree that is this world. They enjoy their existence on the tree. The difference is, one of these birds is busy enjoying the delicious fruit of that tree and the other is mere looking on the act, unconcerned and unattached.

The two birds also can be two minds- conscious and unconscious. This unconscious mind is not connected with the body, mind and sense organs that enjoy the life eating the fruit. They are perpetually together in every life. Then Ramanujan poses the question that was the watcher always with him though he was being born, married, dead and reborn again and again (SS: CP:137)

'into the cruelties
of earthly light, infected air'?

He asks that how 'Iswara can be there to see him undergo the wrong things life after life?'

In 'Pleasure', he comments on the Jaina Monk who feels himself sensuous which is not allowed by the religion, Jainism. In order to enjoy it in a different way, he stands on the anthill of red fire ants and cries at every twinge (BH: CP:139)

"Pleasure, pleasure,
Great pleasure!-
no longer a formula
in the million mouths
of pleasure in- pain"

The Black Hen seems to be more philosophical compared to previous collections. It is like the 'Individualization' phase in which poet tries to put himself in the great tradition of Hinduism, mythologies, and Indian Tradition. Among sixty poems in the collection, he refers to these aspects frequently. In many of them, he mentions the cycle of birth, life and death, concept of zero, the mythological stories and the fall. He seems to have presented the darkness or the darker shades of life.

In 'Birthdays', 'One More on a 'Deathless Theme', 'Engagement', (BH: 231) Ramanujan discusses the theory of Rebirth in Hinduism which propagates that every 'Jeeva' has to undergo 84 yonis as per the 'Karma' in the previous life as he has mentioned in the 'Hindoo' poems and 'Prayers to Lord Murugan', in *Relations* and in *Second Sight*- 'Elements of Composition', 'Questions', Alien' & 'The Difference'. He keenly points out the process of human creation through five elements of composition, talking egg from mother and seed from father, being born (SS: CP:131)

'tearingeach time through a waterbed paradise,
the original ocean of milk,
gills for lungs, the whole body
a sucking at the nipple, a past perfect
of two in one,'

In 'The Drafts', he again talks of the DNAs left in him of his forefathers and his own in his son. About the death of a Hindu, there is a belief that the human being is made up of eight metals pouring through a hole in his head which 'opens/ for the Hindu soul at death'.

Ramanujan has written of darkness and death in his last collection, In 'Birthdays', he wonders about the nature of death because (BH:CP: 206-7)

'Birth seems quite special
every time a Mayfly is born
into the many miracles
of day, night and twilight
But death?"

Through the 'Mythologies- 1, 2', he prays Lord Krishna and Lord Vishnu to give him death that dissolves all the sins by their own hands. In 'Death in Search of a Comfortable Metaphor' he tries to formulate the concept of death as- (BH:CP:273)

'Maybe death is such
a scorpion: bursts its back

and gives birth
to numerous dying things'

His meditation over these concepts takes him closer to the death. He feels sorry for the sudden death of his friend in Jodhpur.

In *"The Black Hen"'* Ramanujan focuses on mythologies, as there are three poems entitled, 'Mythologies -1,2,3' along with other poems referring to them. Myths have been a constant source of inspiration for creative writers since the beginning of literature in the opinion of Cassirer -(1964)

"Myth is one of the oldest and greatest powers in human civilization. It is closely connected with all other human activities- it is inseparable from language, poetry, art and from early historical thought Even science has to pass through a mythical age before it could reach its 'logical age: alchemy preceded chemistry, astrology preceded astronomy" (22)

Ramanujan strongly believing in such supposition, illustrates Indian myths with reference to the present modern world, 'Mythologies 1' takes the myth of 'Putana' from Mahabharata. The demon sent by Kansa, to kill child Krishna, tried to make the child suck her breast which was full of venom. But the child sucked her to her death, 'from deadly mother to happy demon'. She found life in death. She was rescued by Lord Krishna from her life of demon, so, she was happy.Ramanujan further connects this myth to the life of modern man who has accumulated the venom of selfishness, greed and other evils so, he prays Lord Krishna- "

O Terror with a baby face,
Suck me dry. Drink my venom
Renew my breath" (BH: CP: 221)

He feels the need of the Lord in the modern age. Similarly, 'Mythologies 2' presents the myth of Narsimha who killed Hiranykashapu. He had asked boon not to be killed 'by demon, god or by beast, not by day nor by night, / by no manufactured weapon not out of doors not inside, not in the sky/ not on earth' Hiranykashapu represents the modern man who tries to prove himself to be perfect. Poet feels that Vishnu should come down escaping all the conditions of the boon and calls him -(BH: CP: 226)

"Come now, come soon'
Vishnu, man, lion, neither and both, to hold
him in your lap to disembowel his pride
with the steel glint of bare claws at twilight"

In his view, the modern man has got faith in doubt and commerce with bat and night owl. He asks the Lord to adjust his single eye like in the camera which may enable him to see two images of all things around one real and other on the view finder. He requires it in this world of harsh realities.

In 'Mythologies 3', he refers to Mahadevy Akka whose verses he had translated and who was the devotee of Lord Siva. In an introduction to 'The Oxford India Ramanujan' entitled 'An A. K. Ramanujan Story', Molly-Daniels-Ramanujan has commented on the sources and influences on Ramanujan. He translated the poem of four Virasaiva poets from around the twelfth century: Basavanna, Devara Dasimayya, MahadevyAkka and Allama Prabhu in 'Speaking of Siva' (1973). She refers to these poets and their deep influence on Ramanujan as follows:

"*Each of four Virasaivas had their own epithet for their Lord. Basavanna addressed Siva as 'lord of the meeting rivers', Dasimayya as 'Ramanatha', Mahadevyakka as 'Lord white as jasmin', Allama Prabhu as 'Lord of the caves'. Their lives engaged him as much as their poems. The woman poet, Mahadevyakka, went about naked, and when asked how she could be so immodest, she answered that the lord had already seen her, and she did not care about who else saw her. Three decades later, Ramanujan wrote a poem about Mahadevyakka in 'The Black Hen'. Mythologies 3" (2004: xvii)*

It shows the deep impact of classical poetry and traditions on Ramanujan. The poem 'A Devotee's Complaint' (BH: CP:237) mentions, Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, Siva, and the Ascetic, Bhasmasura who dried out for Siva.

The poem 'The Guru'(BH: CP: 251) alludes to the ancient script of Manu, called *Manusmriti*, which divided the society on the basis of the 'Karma' they did. The descending order of it according to him was: Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. He considered women as Shudra and in his opinion, the Shudras were discriminated even below animals. But Ramanujan contradicts the opinion saying:

"Left the Guru to clean his own shoe
For I remembered I was a man born of woman" (BH: CP: 251)

The guru discriminates woman from men which makes him loose the status of the 'Guru' so, perhaps, Ramanujan uses small 'g' instead of capital 'G'.

In his poetry. Ramanujan deconstructs the myths for the modern world and then reconstructs in the modern scenario.

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Modern Interpretation of Mythology in Devdutt Pattanaik's Work: Jaya - An Illustrated Reaccounting of the Mahabharata

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Abstract

Indian mythology, also known as Hindu mythology, is a key theme and an enticing topic for numerous modern Indian authors who have incorporated these mythological characters as literary elements in their works. This document will examine the book "Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of the Mahabharata" written by the famous author Devdutt Pattanaik. The book provides a rational and distinctive viewpoint on how sacred texts and mythological characters present a strong and nurturing attitude toward life, which appears to be absent in contemporary society. The article explores why modern authors utilize these oral traditions and the factors influencing their different interpretations. The writer describes this process as a 'work in progress.' In this scenario, explanations can never actually offer solutions. What people look for are answers. Cultures also need solutions. A solution to the enigma referred to as existence. Human life is not solely determined by reason. The feelings that drive humanity—like love, hate, fear, greed, and ambition—cannot be explained through logical reasoning. Consequently, people are unable to completely grasp life through scientific or fact-based stories. Mythology offers no way out.

The story starts with the death of Parikshit, the ruler of Hastinapuri, who perished from a snake bite. In response, his son Janamejaya decided to perform a yagna in which all snakes would be offered as sacrifices. This signifies the beginning of the recounting of the Mahabharata, initially known as Jaya. Initially, the book confused me a bit. The large number of characters was rather daunting. Yet, after turning a few pages, the recognizable characters started to connect with me, helping me understand the story's start. This book not only tells the story of the Mahabharata, but it also features aspects from folk tales. It showcases the change over time, demonstrating how women, who were initially empowered to select their partners and establish marriage terms, slowly became subordinate to men. This book not only tells the story of the Mahabharata but also illustrates the evolution of periods.

This article showcases the Mahabharata through Devdutt's lens, providing a new interpretation and encouraging us to interact with customs to reinterpret and affirm India's historical truth.

Keywords: *Historical records, Mahabharata, reinterpreting mythology, character growth, gender roles, social frameworks, philosophical insights*

Introduction

Epic literature highlights the culture and lifestyle of a people and their nation. For instance, in the Mahabharata, it is Shakuntala who visits Dushyantha's court to seek protection for their offspring. In Kalidasa's version, it is Shakunthala's father who escorts her to Dushyantha's court to affirm and secure her social status as the King's wife. This depiction of Shakunthala in the Mahabharata contrasts with Vyasa's account, highlighting societal changes. This demonstrates that the epic was repeatedly reexamined and redrafted by different poets and sages to fit their current circumstances. Similarly, in the contemporary world, there remains a need to reassess the Mahabharata. Aside from the stories, the epic provides crucial moral and ethical direction for today's generation.

This study aims to examine the Mahabharata from a new viewpoint as outlined by Devdutt Pattanaik in his work "Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata." The main aim of this paper is to show how recounting myths can be captivating and uncover the concealed mysteries and marvels within. It also emphasizes imparting moral teachings like values, ethics, virtues, and philosophy for mankind. This effort seeks to present and advocate for my beliefs regarding the absurdity of life, asserting that our primary task is to navigate our everyday lives ethically and promote camaraderie among one another, citing Pattanaik's "Jaya," which highlights ethics and values for humanity. Moreover, this study explores the cultural, political, and religious aspects of the text. By examining this topic, readers can adopt a hopeful viewpoint on how exploring mythology may motivate humanity to pursue a virtuous existence.

A new idea or concept does not alter history, but it rejuvenates the values from that history. This paper intends to convey my viewpoints on Jaya by Devdutt Pattanaik, which has analyzed one of India's most important epics, the Mahabharata. Epics are more than just stories, accounts, or events; they mirror a society's culture, impart significant moral lessons to humanity, and influence them, fostering a continuous journey to lead their lives with honor. The Mahabharata mainly highlights the establishment of Dharma and the concepts of Karma.

Reexamining this epic provides understanding of the concepts of Dharma and Karma, which are discussed and confirmed from multiple viewpoints. Recounting the stories from the Mahabharata provides society with important teachings in morals, ethics, virtues, and philosophies that still hold significance today. The central figures, such as Janamejay, Kanva, Budhu, Shantanu, Bhishma, Drona, Duryodhana, Yudhistra, Draupadi, Arjuna, Bhima, Nakula, Sahadeva, and Krishna, convey important lessons that enable us to recognize our strengths and flaws, culminating in a reflection that encourages individuals to introspect, understand the meaning of life in this world, and pursue self-purification. Interacting with this epic fosters the Aristotelian 'K katharsis.' The Mahabharata consists of 18 parvas or sections in its existing format. Comprising one hundred thousand verses, Vyasa created this tale to cover every aspect of human life, including our connections with ourselves and others, along with the principles of ethics, Dharma, economic objectives as Artha, fervent desires as Kama, and spiritual endeavors as Lokha, all expressed within this monumental epic. This story has been recounted in different ways by renowned forebears and their descendants, by teachers and students, by friends and foes, along with both triumphant and vanquished individuals.Yet, each adaptation endures through time and encourages humanity to lead a virtuous life, warning of the consequences of disregarding the laws of Karma.

The dialogue between Janamejay* and Astika* allows us to understand the true essence of Dharma and the destiny of the Kauravas, who reached Swarga, while the Pandavas ended up in Naraka. Additionally, Astika uses Vaisampayana* to tell the story that later became known as "Mahabharata." Numerous characters leave lasting impressions in our hearts as they relate to everyday life; for instance, Pururava's story illustrates the nature of blind love for Urvashi and how it culminates in his obsessive downfall. Here, one can discover a vital lesson: the strength of unchecked love's passion results in a significant downfall. The Yayati complex *unfolds through the lives of Devayani and Sarmistha, illustrating Yayati's marriage to Devayani, which resulted in a limitation for Yadu's descendants, who merely became kingmakers and could not seize the throne. The character Kaushika, who left his parents to pursue sage hood, learned an important lesson from an ordinary butcher, who taught him that one must recognise that everyone's life is shaped by past karma. Subsequent clarity in his perspective on life enabled him to achieve balance.

The Mahabharata emphasizes the feminine traits of its female characters, who act as lasting symbols and communicate various moral teachings across generations. Amba's character exemplifies a woman's bravery as she pursues vengeance against Bhishma in her subsequent life as Shikhandi. Similarly, Draupadi's contempt for Duryodhana's failure sows the groundwork for her future shame, illustrating to humanity the importance of not belittling others. Savithri's character teaches us that determination can change fate; her steadfast belief allowed her to retrieve her husband from death's grasp, and with her ingenuity, she succeeded in saving Satyavan from Yama.

Many lessons can be drawn from the characters in the Mahabharata, and individuals need to adopt those principles, apply them in their lives, and pass them on to future generations. Arjuna's experiences illustrate that simply having physical strength is inadequate for survival; the divine grace of God holds equal significance. When he was supposed to rescue a Brahmin's child but did not succeed, he considered taking his own life, but Krishna directed him to Lord Vishnu, where he found his purpose: to restore Dharma on earth. Arjuna stands for action, whereas Krishna embodies wisdom. The connection between Krishna and Arjuna reflects the link between the Mortal and the Immortal. The bond between Duryodhana and Karna teaches an important lesson; Karna's steadfast loyalty to Duryodhana in the Kurukshetra war, despite discovering his noble heritage, illustrates that while the world rejected him, Duryodhana bestowed upon him great respect, and Karna opted to devote his life to expressing gratitude by battling his own siblings. They act as motivating examples of camaraderie.

The tales of the Mahabharata have persisted through the ages, as they connect with individuals of every generation. For instance, the destruction wrought by the game of dice resulted in the collapse of the powerful Pandavas' realm, a betrayal of faith among their subjects, and the shame of a woman. Yudhishthira's uncontrollable desire to bet led to many problems for his whole family; they were even compelled to endure 13 years of exile in the woods. Additionally, this setback imparts to humanity that valuable lessons can emerge from complete defeat; while in exile, the Pandavas brothers gained deep understanding from numerous sages, which bolstered their spiritual power and mental fortitude. They found many values, such as the significance of marriage, the value of children, the importance of commitments, the obligation of earthly responsibilities, the merit of forgiveness, and several more. Reinterpreting Indian Myths Through the Works of Devdutt Patnaik

The Kurukshetra conflict expresses an important prophecy for mankind. As Arjuna wavered to fight against his teachers and kin, Lord Krishna shared his insights, referred to as the Bhagavad Gita, meaning the song of God. This lesson uncovers a deep reality about mortality—though the body may come to an end, the soul (atma) endures forever. It also imparts that pursuing permanence in this ephemeral world is pointless, cautioning against fostering ego, bitterness, and hostility. Additionally, it emphasizes that our experiences and achievements in this domain are simply illusions (maya). We can acknowledge that all events and changes are as inherent as happiness and grief, winter and summer, brightness and shadow. Gaining this insight indicates that humanity can achieve liberation from pain. Through divine direction, we understand that every action in this earthly life is connected to previous actions, a concept referred to as Karma. Karma communicates the idea that one should accept change and realise that nothing is permanent; every experience or individual one meets serves a purpose and has significance. Consequently, people ought to embrace change and face situations without preconceived notions. God elaborates that every blessing and difficulty arises from an individual's past actions, and thus, people must adjust to the repercussions of their behaviours

God also emphasises that the purpose of Kurukshetra is to cleanse the human mind and heart (body and soul), to maintain Righteousness (Dharma), and to understand the importance of the soul. I just quote Krishna's words: "Both the one who asserts they kill and the one who asserts they are killed are in error. I represent both the murderer and the victim. Still, I am unbreakable. I embody your physical presence and your spirit, that which is fleeting and that which endures. I embody the world you inhabit, the essence that resides within you, and the mind that connects the two. .... "Only I possess the ability to unravel the web of Karma."

Conclusion

Reexamining history and mythology or resurrecting oral traditions has become an important trend among Indian scholars and authors. The portrayal, reimagining, and recreation of historical events or figures are evident in the writings of numerous Indian authors. Human life is not governed by reason. The feelings that drive humanity – including love, hatred, fear, greed, and ambition – cannot be rationalised through logic. As a result, individuals often struggle to find meaning in life through scientific or evidence-based conversations. To ensure both survival and psychological health, they need a framework for understanding.

They require myth, and myth necessitates mythology. We fear that rational thinkers will convince younger generations to see ancient beliefs as mere illusions and to consider God as nothing beyond a fabricated theory. We worry that if these generations are influenced, they will recklessly reject the history that has defined our comprehension of India's past. Subjectivity is debated in a society that longs for objectivity. The power of myth resides in its capacity to change viewpoints. It empowers people to accept their own truths and the truths of others as they move toward deeper understanding

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Retelling and Reinterpretation of Myths in Literature: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Perspectives

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Abstract

Myths have occupied a foundational position in human culture, functioning as repositories of collective memory, ethical codes, and symbolic meaning. As Mircea Eliade observes, myth narrates "a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time" (Eliade 5). In contemporary literature and cinema, the practice of retelling and reinterpreting myths has emerged as a significant creative and critical phenomenon. Writers and filmmakers revisit canonical narratives to address present-day concerns related to gender, power, identity, ecology, and cultural authority. This paper examines myth retellings as creative as well as ideological acts that simultaneously preserve tradition and revise inherited meanings. Drawing on theoretical insights from myth criticism, cultural studies, feminist theory, postcolonial studies, and reception theory, the paper analyzes selected works from Indian English and global literature. It argues that contemporary retellings transform myths into dynamic sites of ethical inquiry, ideological negotiation, and cultural dialogue.

Keywords: *Myth retelling, reinterpretation, Indian English literature, feminist revision, postcolonial myth, narrative authority*

Introduction

Myths are among the oldest narrative forms known to human civilization, serving as symbolic frameworks through which societies articulate their understanding of the cosmos, social order, and moral values. Carl Jung famously defines mythic images as expressions of the collective unconscious, stating that archetypes are "forms or images of a collective nature which occur practically all over the earth as constituents of myths" (Jung 43). While myths traditionally carry an aura of sacredness and authority, they are not static. Eliade himself acknowledges that myth is meaningful only when it is "re-actualized" through retelling (Eliade 18).

In modern and contemporary literature, retelling myths has become a prominent creative strategy. Roland Barthes conceptualizes myth as a system of communication, asserting that "myth is a type of speech" rather than a fixed narrative (Barthes 109). From this perspective, myths are especially open to reinterpretation, as their meanings are shaped by historical and social contexts. Indian English literature, drawing on epics such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, demonstrates this process vividly by reimagining mythological characters through alternative and often marginalized viewpoints.

Critical Perspectives on Myth: Definitions and Debates

Joseph Campbell interprets myth as a guide for human experience, arguing that myths are "public dreams" that give symbolic shape to private psychological realities (Campbell 19). His theory of the monomyth emphasizes universality and recurrence, yet it has been critiqued for overlooking cultural specificity. In contrast, Barthes foregrounds ideology, noting that myth "transforms history into nature" by making cultural constructs appear natural and unquestionable (Barthes 129).

A.K. Ramanujan challenges the idea of a single authoritative version of myth, especially in the Indian context. He famously remarks,

"The Ramayana is not a single text, but a group of texts; not a closed structure, but an open-ended one. There is no original Ramayana, no Ur-text, no archetype."
(Ramanujan, 22)

This insight underscores that plurality and variation are intrinsic to mythic traditions, and that retelling is a continuation rather than a corruption of myth.Feminist criticism has further exposed how myths encode patriarchal values. Adrienne Rich describes revision as
"Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival." (Rich 18).

Marina Warner similarly argues that myths and fairy tales have historically shaped gender roles, noting that they "encode social rules and expectations" (Warner xx).Postcolonial theory adds another lens to myth retellings. Homi K. Bhabha views cultural narratives as sites of negotiation, suggesting that reinterpretation produces a "third space" where dominant meanings are unsettled (Bhabha 55). These perspectives collectively establish myth as a dynamic and contested field.

Indian English Retellings: Re-centering the Margins

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* (2008) exemplifies feminist myth revision. By allowing Draupadi to narrate her own story, Divakaruni challenges epic patriarchy. Draupadi's voice asserts, "I am not the woman you think I am" (Divakaruni 3), signalling a deliberate departure from canonical portrayals. The novel questions the ethical foundations of dharma by foregrounding female desire, humiliation, and resistance.

Vaishnavi Patel's *Kaikeyi* (2022) similarly reconfigures moral binaries. Kaikeyi reflects that history remembers her only as a villain, observing bitterly that "stories are kinder to men than they are to women" (Patel, Kaikeyi 214). *Goddess of the River* (2024) further extends myth retelling by granting narrative voice to the river goddess Ganga, aligning myth with ecological consciousness and maternal agency.

Global and Cinematic Retellings

Madeline Miller's *Circe* (2018) reimagines Greek myth through a feminist lens. Circe's assertion, "I was not made for a husband" (Miller 92), encapsulates the novel's emphasis on autonomy and self-definition. Cinema also participates in mythic revision. Linda Hutcheon notes that adaptations are not secondary but "repetitions without replication" that invite new interpretations (Hutcheon 7). Films such as Sita Sings the Blues (2008) and the Baahubali series (2015–2017) demonstrate how myth continues to evolve within popular culture.

Reception of Myth Retellings

The reception of myth retellings has been marked by both acclaim and controversy. Hutcheon argues that adaptations encourage audiences to become "active interpreters" rather than passive consumers (Hutcheon 8). At the same time, reinterpretations of sacred myths have provoked resistance. The debates surrounding Ramanujan's essay reveal anxieties about authenticity and cultural authority, confirming that myths remain powerful and emotionally charged cultural resources.

Conclusion

Retelling and reinterpretation of myths constitute a vital literary and cultural practice in the contemporary world. As Barthes reminds us, myth is never innocent; it is always shaped by ideology (Barthes 142). Through feminist, postcolonial, and ecological lenses, contemporary writers and filmmakers transform ancient narratives into living dialogues that speak to present concerns. Myths survive not through rigid preservation but through continual reinvention.

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Where Myth Ends, Sita Begins: A Re-reading Beyond Sacrifice and Silence.

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Abstract:

In India Sita has been shown as the ideal woman. She is known for her calmness, obedience, Loyalty and her sacrifice for others. Over the time this image of Sita has become a standard that society expects the same from all women. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's 'The Forest of Enchantments' retells the Ramayana from Sita's perspective. The novel shows that Sita is not just a silent, obedient, loyal woman but a person with her real and individual thoughts. This paper shows how the novel focuses on Sita's experiences of exile, suffering and her motherhood. It shows how her silence is not a weakness but a strong response to unfair expectations and never-ending Judgment. Sita's choices reflect courage and self-respect and changing her story from sacrifice to the empowerment and individuality and self respect.

Keywords:*Myth, Sita, Ramayana, Sacrifice, Silence, Motherhood, Strength, Women, Courage, Self-respect*

Introduction:

Myths are old stories that influence society and culture. They teach lessons about life, values, obedience. The Ramayana is one of the most important stories in India. And Sita is one of its central characters. She is portrayed as pure, patient character who always ready to sacrifice for her family and society. But showing women only this way creates pressure on women. It forces women to be quiet, obedient and sacrificing by ignoring their own thoughts and feelings. This idea makes women's identities and fails to see their real struggles and emotions.

Literature Review:

In the Ramayana, Sita is mostly shown as a soft and obedient wife. Her pain, fear, and feelings are not talked much. Because of this, people only remember her as a symbol of sacrifice.

In modern era writers retell old myths in a new way. They try to show women as real person with thoughts and emotions. These stories help us understand how women feel and why they make certain choices. Such writings help readers think in a new way about old stories.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's 'The Forest of Enchantments' is one such story. It tells the Ramayana from Sita's perspective. This book helps us to see that Sita not just as a silent woman, but as a thinking, feeling, and strong person. This paper studies how the book gives Sita a voice and shows her strength, courage, and self-respect.

Reinterpreting Myths Through a Female Voice:

In many old stories, men are always shown as the heroes. Women are always portrayed as perfect examples of obedience, beauty and loyalty. Their feelings, worries and struggles are rarely shown. Divakaruni changes this track in this book. Sita narrates her own story and talks about what makes her happy, what are her worries and what causes her pain.

With Sita's own words, readers learn how sad and lonely she felt during her exile in the forest. We see society always ignore her needs and how people judged her even when she had done nothing wrong. By showing Sita's thoughts and emotions Divakaruni turns an old myth into a story that feels real and so much relatable in today's life too. Readers understand that women's experiences and feelings are important and

should be respected. The story also asks an important question and that is Why do societies praise women for their sacrifices but fail to trust or believe in their honesty?

Beyond Sacrifice: Rethinking Social Expectations:

In the Ramayana, Sita is again and again asked to prove her purity and her honesty. These tests are not about finding the truth but about society's fear and doubt about the women. Divakaruni shows that no matter how obedient, kind, or honest a woman is, society Always remains unsatisfied. Sita come to about this truth that When women are forced to keep proving themselves, the tests never stop. People always expect more from them but never fulfil their wishes. Sita experiences this so many times in her life. She understands the reality and finally learns that her real value comes from her own choices, courage and her honesty. She started to believe that being kind, brave and loyal is more important than trying to please others.

And this reality changes her life. She becomes stronger and learns to take her own decisions. Sita's story teaches us value yourself first, and do not depend on others to decide your worth.

Silence as Strength, Not Weakness:

Many people think that Sita's silence means she agrees with everything or that she is weak. But the novel shows a very different meaning behind her Silence . Sita's silence is a sign of inner strength and respect to everyone. She carefully chooses when to speak and when not to speak When Sita said No to face another test, she is not running away from it but She is protesting in a strong and brave way. Her decision to return to the Earth challenges a society who cares more about appearances and proof than about truth. By staying silent, Sita sends a bold message against judgment . Her silence is not weakness but it is her way of showing courage, wisdom and self-control. The novel teaches that silence can be a form of power and women can use it for their choices and stand up for themselves.

Motherhood and Moral Strength of sites:

Sita's role as a mother is a main part of her story in 'The Forest of Enchantments'. She raises her sons Lava and Kusha in Valmiki's Ashram with devotion, love, care and courage. As a mother she heals from the pain and hardships she experienced during her life.

She teaches her children kindness, love, justice, and self-respect. Instead of Feeling sad on her difficult past, Sita focuses on shaping and building the future of her children. Her love and her guidance help them grow into brave and wise. As a Mother Sita becomes a source of strength and hope. It shows that women can be strong, caring and brave at the same time. With her role as a mother, Sita proves that true strength comes not only from bravery or in facing challenges but also from love, care, and the ability to shape the life of her children

Conclusion:

The Forest of Enchantments brings Sita's story back after many years of silence. By giving Sita a voice Divakaruni turns the old myth into a story of courage, self-respect and personal choice. Here Sita's journey is no longer only about obedience and sacrifice but all about speaking her truth, making her own decisions, and respecting herself.

The story teaches us about self-respect. Sita is no longer only a symbol of sacrifice; she becomes a real person who stands for herself, shapes her future. Women should not be criticized but They should be trusted and respected. This story helps us to understand that women are not weak. They are very strong and brave too. The story teaches us to treat women with love and respect in stories and in real life.

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Myth and Psychoanalytical Exploration in Movie Bhool Bhulaiyaa

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Abstract

Indian films are strongly representing ancient myths using various themes like archetype journey of protagonist, symbols to explore human experience, identity, and cultural values. Mythological elements enhance the depth and complexity of storytelling, to explore profound themes such as the human condition, morality, and the nature of existence.

Bhool Bhulaiyaa is a psychological horror film released in 2007.This film is directed by Priyadarshan and produced by T. Series. It is a remake of the 1993 Malayalam film Manichitrathazhu written by Madhu Muttam and directed by Fazil, which is based on a 19th-century tragedy that happened at Madhu's Alummoottil tharavad an old traditional mansion in Muttom near Haripad in central Travancore. The film is casted by Akshay Kumar Vidya Balan that blends Indian myth, folk belief, and modern psychiatry.

Bhool Bhulaiyaa is a psychological horror film that reflects Indian myth folk tale belief of spirit and modern psychiatrist. On the surface, it appears to be a Ghost story rooted in superstition, but at a deeper level, the film explores repression, dissociation, trauma, and the unconscious mind. The film demystifies the supernatural by revealing psychological truth, while still preserving the cultural power of myth.

Present Research paper focused on myth into psychology of the protagonist under the point of

1. Dissociative Identity Disorder
2. Trauma and Repetition Compulsion
3. Mythical and Cultural Aspects
4. Myth vs Science

. Indian mythological tradition is vast body of sacred stories that explain creation, dharma, karma, life, death, fear, desire, and liberation. Indian myths are sacred narratives preserved in Vedas, Upanishads, Epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata, Purans, Folk and regional tradition.

Vedic myths focus on creation, order and sacrifice. puranic myths like Shiva myths, Vishnu myths, Devi myths. Shiva is lord of destruction, cremation grounds, asceticism which associated with death, fear, transformation. Vishnu Myths is preserver of cosmic order through avatars like Narasimha, half man, half lion returned of the repressed breaking rational categories. Krishna represents Integration of desire and spirituality. Devi Myths represents the feminine unconscious power. Kali represents terror of death, maternal protection. Durga slaying Mahishasura (devil) represents triumph of integrated psychic energy over chaos.

The history of Indian movies always presents mythological themes related with story of God and Godess .Indian Myth is part and parcel of the Indian Films. Even in modern time's people enjoying the mythical movies. The film Bhool Bhulaiya is mythical horror but it is also psychological journey of protagonist

The movie Bhool Bhulaiya is a story about the folktale about the Bengali dancer Manjulika who was the dancer in palace of Raja Vibhuti Narayan. Manjulika is beautiful who loves shashidhar dancer. Both dancer loves each other madly. When king Knew about their love affaires. Raja Vibuti Narayan was killed Manjulika's lover Shashidhar on Durgaathami because of king also love with Manjulika.he prisoned Majulika for marriage. But she committed suicide and hanged herself. Manjulika cursed that her soul will take the revenge. So everyone knows that the the palace of the king Vibhuti Narayan is haunted by the ghost of Manjulika.

When the movie starts in present time Badri is head of this family. Siddharth and Avani the son and daughter in law of Badri's elder brother. Both they lived in USA but now they return to their native village and decid to stay in their ancestral palace which is haunted at first Badri Narayan take objection about the Siddhartha

decision but after that his family also shifted in the haunted palace. Radha is adopted daughter of the Badri who is childhood friend and want to marry with Siddhartha but now Radha recovered herself immediately. Siddharth is crowned as the king.

The real story starts when Avani opened the locked and strictly forbidden Manjulika's room with the help of her sister-in-law Nandini.after that the unexpected event happening in palace. Badri Narayan understand that Manjulika's ghost starts her revenge. Siddharth rejects the ghost story of the Manjulika and even he not blaming his wife Avani.he thought all these doing by Radha and Radha need treatment so he called his psychiatrist friend Dr. Aditya Shrivastav.

In the other side his uncle called their family Guru and philosopher shri Yaggyaprakash Bharati. Now the all these matter is evaluated with both side one is mythical and other is psychological level. But Shri Yaggyaprakash Bharati and Dr. Aditya both are met before in conference which on Paranoramal Psychology.

Actually Avani influenced story of Manjulika. She starts to think like Manjulika, wearing her cloth and dancing like her in night. Even though she speaks Bengali language. Dr Aditya found her truth when he visited her native place where in childhood she lived with her grandmother and grandmother told her many mythic story. But her father took her in aboard without her wish. She repressed because of the departure of Granny. She loves her native place. In aboard she missed everything. But after she married with Siddharth and come in India. She placed all her repressed thought and memory connects the story of Manjulika and considered Manjulika herelf.

The character Avni suffers from Dissociative Identity Disorder, a complex mental health condition where a person has two or more distinct personality states, or "alters," that take control at different times, causing memory gaps, identity confusion, and significant distress, often stemming from severe childhood trauma. Symptoms include hearing voices (internal dialogues between alters), sudden shifts in behaviour, and severe amnesia for personal history or daily events. a condition where repressed trauma splits the psyche into multiple identities. Through the tragic story of Manjulika Avani represents the repressed self, born from emotional neglect, cultural displacement. suppressed desires.

The hunted palace, forbidden locked room, and haunting music create a sense of the Freud's uncanny—something familiar yet terrifying. Avni is both self and other The palace is a psychic space, mirroring her fragmented mind Everyday domestic space becomes threatening The horror arises not from the supernatural but from inner psychological conflict. Avni unconsciously re-enacts Manjulika's story dance rage desire for revenge. This reflects repetition compulsion, where trauma is relived until acknowledged and resolved.

Role of the analyst as Dr. Aditya Srivastava is powerful to define the really of Manjulika's story. Dr. Aditya functions as a psychoanalyst. He listens rather than dismisses belief of members of family. He uses role-play (dance, costume, ritual) as therapeutic catharsis allows the unconscious to express itself safely, healing occurs not by denying myth, but by working through it.

The unexpected event also done by Avani. Members of family think that it is because of Manjulika's ghost. But Dr Aditya Shrivastav search everything and proved that Radha is innocent. During the engagement of Sidddartha's cousin Nadini and Sharad ,Avani spills tea on Sharad dress and to take away from him from programme.when Aditya and Siddharth search for her. they supposed Sharad molesting her. but Aditya tells to Siddharth Avani is real culprit. She has the disease of Dissociative Identity Disorder.

He explains that all the strange thing happened in palace which done by Avani. According to Freud, repression pushes unacceptable thoughts into the unconscious, where they return in disguised forms—here, as a "ghost." Manjulika is not a ghost but a psychic return of the repressed.

Aditya and Siddhartha see her as Manjulika dancing to the tunes she had been dancing to with her love Shashidhar before the king killed him. Through this the sad love story of the old king Vibhuti Narayan, who loved a dancer, Manjulika, who, in turn, loved Shashidhar (the dancer in the same court) is revealed. Avni, while possessed by Manjulika's personality, imagined herself and Sharad, (whom she thinks is Shashidhar), dancing in the court of the king. This triggered Avni's disorder; she assumes the identity of Manjulika and tries to kill her own husband Siddharth, as she

sees him as Vibhuti Narayan who killed Manjulika's lover and later locked her up in her room where she committed suicide.

During Drugashtami In order to cure Avni of her illness, Aditya triggers Manjulika's personality and makes her promise to leave if Manjulika gets the opportunity to kill the king and have her revenge. Meanwhile the priest Shri Yagyaprakashji Bharti also arrives to visit Siddharth. With his help, during the ritual of Durgashtami, Manjulika is tricked and slays a dummy of Siddharth thinking she was killing the king. After the killing, Manjulika's personality leaves Avni forever. Aditya hypnotizes the unconscious Avni and tells her that everything is fine and that she will continue her life as a same, happy and peaceful person. Everything ends well and Aditya tells Radha that he will send his parents if she is interested in marrying him.

India is the country of 33 cores God and Goddess. People in India carried rituals and belief. Indian mythology believes on good and evil under the mythical image under the name of 'Devas' and 'Asuras'. This concept of myth represents to victory of good and destroy of evil which always done by God and Goddess.

Mythical and cultural aspects represent through Manjulika as a mythic Figure. Manjulika resembles mythic female figures in Indian tradition: Yakshini, Chudail wronged woman-turned-vengeful spirit. She symbolizes patriarchal injustice silenced female desire punished transgression. Myth becomes a cultural language for suppressed trauma. tantra, dance, and ritual the classical dance (Mohiniyattam) acts as a ritual invocation. Dance symbolized possession, music symbolized trigger and costume symbolic transformation This reflects ancient belief systems where body and spirit are inseparable.

The locked room as mythic space. The forbidden room represents a taboo space, The unconscious mind. A sealed traumatic memory opening it unleashes chaos, echoing myths where forbidden knowledge leads to destruction.

Myth vs Science a Reconciliation The film does not mock belief systems. Instead, it shows how myth explains what psychology later diagnoses suggest that folklore encoded psychological truths long before modern science Manjulika exists psychologically even if she does not exist supernaturally.

Feminist Psychoanalytic Reading Manjulika is a woman punished for desire. Avni's breakdown reflects patriarchal silencing madness becomes the only space for female expression. This aligns with Elaine Showalter's idea that hysteria often reflects cultural oppression rather than illness alone.

Conclusion

Bhool Bhulaiyaa is not merely a horror film but a psychological and mythical narrative of repression. It demonstrates that Ghosts are often internal Myths are symbolic truths healing requires confronting the unconscious, not suppressing it The film ultimately transforms fear into understanding, and myth into psychology.

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Myth Retelling in Mythological Novels of Anand Neelakantan

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Abstract-

Anand Neelakantan is a modern writer who contributed vastly in the field of Indian mythology. He used myth retailing as one of the most prominent narrative devices to tell the mythological stories through different perspectives; here he has used his novels to tell the mythological tale from the vanquished side. This became his one of the most prominent features. The characters of his novel are driven by gender politics, power struggles, caste, psychology rather than just divine destiny which makes it not just mythological work but a work which portrayed social realism. In his version of mythology, he has given voice to the marginalized community and also those who were neglected in original tales like the common people who suffered from the aftermath of divine Wars. His works Asura: The tale of the vanquished, Ajaya: Role of the Dice and Ajaya: Rise of Kali show the authors attempt to make the shift in perspective and Demythologization of characters who are considered Gods or heroes and those who are considered villains traditionally. His creative style successfully implants the seed of contemplation into Reader's mind.

Keywords- *Myth retelling, tale from the vanquished side, social realism, voice to the marginalized community, Demythologization.*

Introduction-

Anand Neelakantan is Indian bestselling novelist who especially wrote in the field of mythological fiction and tells the stories from the point of view of those who are considered not heroic characters traditionally. Basically he wrote the mythology from the point of view of antagonists or supporting figures. Born in Tripunithura, near Kochi, Kerala he graduated from Government Engineering College Thrissur, Kerala and worked at Indian Oil Corporation from 1999 to 2022. After that he decided to become a full time writer.

He also wrote fictional stories which acted as official literary prequels to the blockbuster Baahubali films which are *The rise of shivagami* (2017), *Chaturanga* (2020) and *Queen of Mahishmati* (2020). He also wrote stories for children. The famous ones are *The Very Extremely Most Naughty Asura Tails for kids* (2020), *The Tale of the Naughty Flying Mountains* (2023), *Mahi the elephant who flew over the blue mountains* (2023), *The tell of a Naughty prank* (2024) etc. Anand Neelakantan has also written screen plays and story lines for various Indian television and OTT productions some of them are, Siya ke Ram (Star Plus), Chakravartin Ashoka Samrat (Colors TV), Mahabali Hanuman (Sony TV), Sarfarosh- Battle of saragarhi (Netflix), Swaraj (DD National), Taj: divided by blood (ZEE 5), Shrimad Ramayan (Sony TV) etc.

He has written vastly about the reinterpretation of mythological tales. We are going to see his perspective in his prominent works which are *Asura: The tale of the vanquished*, *Ajaya: Role of the Dice* and *Ajaya: Rise of Kali.* In this work he has neglected the traditional character's narratives and told the story from the villains or marginalized characters' perspective. The Asura is based on the Ramayana epic. In Asura he has changed the narrative voice. The story has been told through the perspectives of Ravana, the King of Asura and a Bhadra common Asura citizen. This gives this novel shift from commonly known story to the story told by marginalized who were mainly considered as an evil in Indian mythology. The other two works are based on the Mahabharata epic. In *Ajaya: role of the dice* and *Ajaya: rise of Kali* story were told from the perspective of Kauravas who were defeated in the war of Kurukshetra, and also from the characters who were from the side of Pandavas mainly Yudhishthira and Krishna who were shown as a manipulative and morally ambiguous characters.

Myth retelling-

The selected works of the author presents the Indian mythology through the myth retailing narrative in which the author has given voice to the characters traditionally considered villains and given less importance in epics and mythology. In the case of Asura the story has been re-told from Ravana and Bhadra's perspective where the infallible approach towards Ram has been discarded and also the author made efforts to portray traditional villains like Ravana in a human way. Same like that in Ajaya series the Kouravas who were traditionally shown as greedy and morally corrupt characters of Mahabharata epic here they were portrayed as loving brother, loyal friend and tragic Hero so basically here author try to humanize the Kouravas specially Duryodhana while emphasizing on the real character analysis of traditionally considered positive characters like Krishna and Pandavas.

Tale from the vanquished side-

This is one of the most striking features of Anand Neelakantan's novels. In both Asura and Ajay series he has told the story from the perspective of the defeated side. Try to make them look more human than traditional mythologists. This is where the narrative voice has shifted from the winners ' side to the defeated ones. In Asura the story is told from two perspectives. These two narratives try to humanize Ravana and the other narrator Bhadra who is the common Asura citizen affected by the war of Kings. This novel presents the question of why the asuras were branded as Evil in our mythology. The Bhadra's view of the war has been depicted as a war between great men and how it destroys the lives of common man and that is an ultimate cost of idealized heroism. In Asura Anand Neelakantan said that, 'histories are not fact, it is written by Victor's and the vanquished are always on the wrong side'. The prominent narrator of Asura Ravana explains that he was not a demon or a monster he was a human but their hatred towards him made him the demon that he was not born into. This highlights the humanization of Ravana and the rejection of traditional demonized images of him. Anand Neelakantan also acts as a criticizer of Devas and their moral hypocrisy by stating that, 'when Devas commits sin they call it destiny and when the Asura's resist them they are branded as Evil'. This focuses on double standards in morality and questions the Devas divine authority. Neelakantan also raises the questions on Dharma which is a very prominent aspect in all the mythological works he says that, 'Dharma is not same for everyone because it always differentiates between who is doing it and that's why it depends on who defines it'. It reiterates the Neelakantan's idea that Dharma is not universal but political and subjective in nature. Another narrator of the story Asura is Bhadra the common Asura citizen who has suffered greatly by the Wars of these great men and shares his views that, 'Wars are fought by kings and its price was paid by the people like me means commoners'. Neelakantan's Bhadra represents the people often ignored in epics which are the common people and also he highlights their suffering. Anand Neelakantan also questions the identity of positive and negative sides of mythology because, 'the Rakshasas were branded as Rakshasa long before they became an enemy to the Devas'. This shows the identities imposed by the other group.

Another prominent work which is the Ajay series of Anand Neelakantan focuses on a point of view presented by Duryodhana the king of Kauravas. Here the author presents a view about the original epic and its moral binary towards the victory according to the author, 'victory equals righteousness, doesn't matter if the defeated side was morally right or wrong'. Here Anand portrays an interpretation of Dharma which is again political and subjective. The game of dice often seen as the evil of Kauravas is reinterpreted as a political trap rather than moral failure in this story. Pandavas Dharma is justified by lineage and divine sanctions which can be considered as rule based Dharma. Regarding that Neelakantan said about the caste system in Aryavarta that, 'there birth matters more than the ability of a person'. Here he attacks on varn system. But Kouravas Dharma was Merit based. It is inclusive and rooted in social equality. Neelakantan compares Dharma with politics and argues that Dharma is a weapon in the hands of the powerful by that Neelakantan questions moral authority. The other characters of traditional mythology who were considered in a positive light like Yudhishthira and Krishna were also criticized on some moral grounds. Although he did not entirely challenge the divinity of Krishna but still he says about him that, 'he never lied, he merely hid the truth' that brings him down at the level of strategist not divine. He portrayed Duryodhana as a tragic

hero by showing that he just wanted fairness not war this represents Anand Neelakantan's efforts to humanize the villain.

Voice to the marginalized community-

In these novels Anand Neelakantan tried to give voice to the marginalized community of Indian mythology which are womens, commoners, villainous aspects etc. In Asura Anand Neelakantan used Bhadra, a common Asura citizen as second narrator where he gives a voice to the silent character of mainstream mythology and epics. The feminist characters like Kaikesi Shurpanakha and Sita are portrayed with greater agency and at much deeper level emotionally. The Shurpanakha's humiliation has shown as a turning point which is interpreted as a gender violence which shows the novel's stance towards patriarchal morality. About Shurpanakha Neelakantan says that, 'her crime was not desire; it was daring to desire'. In Ajaya series the varna system of Aryavarta is highlighted by Neelakantan where 'the birth matter more than the ability' and the characters like Eklavya, Karna and Shambuka where the victims of this system which leads to injustice at both personal and social level for these characters which again reinforce authors criticism of hierarchical society.

Demythologization of characters-

In order to retell the stories of traditional mythologies it is needed to make in the flexible adjustments in the characters of these epics Anand Neelakantan has done the same. He has broken the traditional rigid boundaries of binary good and evil and presented the characters through his perspective as flawed and morally ambiguous.

The prominent characters of the novel Asura which is Rama and Ravana both are re interpreted by Neelakantan. Here Ravana which is an epitome of evilness in traditional mythology is not portrayed as a 10 headed monster but a visionary, flowed human shaped by the humiliation received to his sister which lead to an ambition to avenge the social injustice that has done to him. On the other hand, the Rama who is portrayed as a divine figure in traditional mythology which is considered to be an epitome of mankind is portrayed as a rigid, politically driven leader which represents the Aryan Supremacy and not as a flawless God.

In the Ajaya series the traditionally considered viewpoint of characters was reversed by the author. Duryodhana, who is considered as a main culprit of Mahabharata war in traditional mythology, here portrayed a capable, just and progressive ruler. Just because he has not discriminated between his friends and his Advisors on the basis of their birth which also shows that he was a capable and progressive leader. Anand Neelakantan says regarding the Duryodhana that, 'he was not born evil, he was made so by the world that refused him fairness'. On the other hand, the other characters of these novels where from the Pandavas side especially Yudhishthira and Krishna who were considered morally upright and the pivotal characters of Mahabharata war where seen in different light by Anand Neelakantan here rather than considering them as a divine deity he has shown them as politically manipulative and morally ambiguous characters and focused how history glorified them just because they were winners and silenced the defeated. Krishna has been portrayed not as a God but as a brilliant strategist who uses deceit whenever necessary. The Pandavas were portrayed as flawed humans who were insecure and driven by their ambition.

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Rewriting the Divine: Mythical Reinterpretation and Retelling in Ashwin Sanghi's The Krishna Key and Keepers of The Kalachakra

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Abstract

The idea of myth has long since fascinated the world and its inhabitants. Literature has seen wide number of authors writing on these myths, reinterpreting them and retelling them in their own manner and style. These retellings have even received large number of readers. Many scholars and experts too have carried out their studies and research on these myths and their retellings. These myths and their retellings have become more popular in the contemporary world, thanks to the modern-day authors and their inclination towards these myths. The authors give these myths a breath of fresh air through their writings and make the readers to not just read for pleasure but also give a thought on what is written for introspection. Ashwin Sanghi is one such contemporary author from India, who has reinterpreted and retold India's ancient myths and beliefs in many of his works. The paper will study the representation of myths, their reinterpretation and retelling in Sanghi's books The Krishna Key and Keepers of the Kalachakra.

Keywords- *Myth; Retelling; Lord Krishna; Buddhism; Science; History.*

Myth as a concept has for long intrigued the layman and the expert alike. It is no longer considered as something sacred or ancient; rather it is used by authors as a dynamic narrative in modern times with modern consciousness to reinterpret tradition. Ashwin Sanghi's novels are an example of a literary movement, which fuses mythology with science, history, and philosophy to create intellectually charged thrillers. Through *The Krishna Key* which was published in 2012 and *Keepers of the Kalachakra* published in 2018, Sanghi retells and reinterprets Indian myths as no longer showcasing just gods and heroes, but as treasure cove of knowledge texts that keep out of sight historical, spiritual, and scientific truths. While Sanghi's *The Krishna Key* explores the myth of Krishna through archaeology and historical rationalization, his *Keepers of the Kalachakra* expands the mythic canvas to a cosmological scale, blending Buddhist and Hindu cosmology with quantum theory. These novels, synced together, reveal Sanghi's progressive reinterpretation of myth from divine history to universal philosophy and his effort to bridge the perennial conflict between faith and reason in modern India.

Sanghi's works *The Krishna Key* and *Keepers of the Kalachakra* contain myth at their center. Sanghi uses the ancient mythological framework for his thrillers. The myth of Lord Krishna, the ideas regarding his kingdom of Dwaraka, symbols related to his existence, the Mahabharata all of it form the focal point in *The Krishna Key*. Sanghi weaves the novel around the murders of the characters who possess a relic in each in relation to Lord Krishna. Prof. Saini is accused of murdering the characters, and he must race against time to prove himself innocent by finding the truth and the real culprit. Sanghi uses Lord Krishna as a symbol for hidden wisdom and absolute truth. He does not bring Lord Krishna as a character, but makes His presence felt across the novel. The quest for truth in the work *The Krishna Key* also displays the moral complexity evident in the Mahabharata- a competition between knowledge and belief, Dharma and deception.

In *Keepers of the Kalachakra*, Sanghi blends Buddhist and Hindu cosmology—especially the Buddhist and Hindu beliefs regarding the cyclical nature of the universe, the cyclical time that rotates, the endless cycle of creation, preservation and destruction.

"'…Son, have you ever observed monks making a sand mandala?'"
"'… Remember, though- the pattern may be swept away but the sand is not destroyed. The pattern is human civilization and sand is knowledge. Humans come and go but knowledge remains.'" (Sanghi,Keepers of the Kalachakra, 323)

Sanghi talks about the cycle of life and its depiction through sand mandala drawn by the Buddhist monks. Sanghi writes for the reader to understand about the temporal quality of life, but also explains the cyclical nature of time, as a continuous and never-ending process.

In Devdutt Pattanaik's book Myth=Mithya: A Handbook of Hindu Mythology talks about symbolic logic of Indian Myths, and Sanghi rationalizes and reinterprets the myths with the support of science, history and archaeology. In *The Krishna Key,* he uses history and archaeology with evidence to rationalize the myths regarding Lord Krishna and His kingdom of Dwarka and the great war of Mahabharata. Sanghi writes a long conversation between Prof. Ravi Mohan Saini and Priya, where Saini explains about the historical evidence in the Greek account for Lord Krishna's existence. He writes about the renaming of Lord Krishna as Heracles, influenced from the name Hari. Sanghi also mentions Megasthenes' account of the town of the Sourasenoi, which according to Hinduism is the Yadava clan of Lord Krishna's grandfather Shurasena and also the detailed information about the city of Methora (Mathura). In *The Krishna Key,* Sanghi writes a conversation between Mikhailov and Sharma, in which Mikhailov talks about the significance of the lotus and its relevance in various cultures including Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism and also its connection to rebirth in the ancient Egypt. He mentions about a UCLA team's recovery of a 1, 300 years old lotus seed from a lakebed in north-east China. Thus, with the use of history, archaeology and science Sanghi rationalizes myth, which otherwise is considered demystifying.

In *The Krishna Key,* Sanghi refers to the *Surya Siddhanta* through a conversation between Saini and Priya. It is an ancient book on astronomy. Saini explains to Priya that the *Surya Siddhanta* is the foundation for Hindu and Buddhist calendars, and Saini talks about the cyclical nature of the four Yugas, namely, *Satyuga, Tretayuga, Dwaparyuga and Kaliyuga.* Saini is shown referring to the book stating the date of the beginning of the *Kaliyuga.*

"'This particular treatise tells us that at precisely midnight on 18th February in 3102 BCE, Kaliyuga began.'" (Sanghi, The Krishna Key, 13)

As Roland Barthes in his seminal work *Mythologies* by referring to Saussure's Semiology writes about myth as a semiological system, that is myth as a system of symbols. Thus, Sanghi uses symbols like Syamantaka gem, the animal seals, the baseplate not only as remnants of Lord Krishna's or Dwarka's existence with scientific and archeological facts but also uses them to extend the message of spirituality and human existence.

In *Keepers of the Kalachakra,* the mandalas, the lotus, the cryptic codes become the symbols of thrill as well as of ancient Buddhist beliefs and *Tantra*. Sanghi uses these mythical symbols to talk about the relevance of ancient knowledge and spiritualism.

Sanghi reinterprets mythological archetypes through his characters. He bases his characters on the characters from ancient texts like Ravi Mohan Saini becomes the modern Arjuna, in a spiritual dilemma, trying to find the truth and is the protagonist of the novel The Krishna Key. The serial killer or the antagonist is Taarak Vakil, who is falsely regarded as the tenth avatar or incarnation of Lord Vishnu. As per the myth, the Kalki avatar is supposed to slay and cleanse the world of Adharma (unrighteousness) and bring an end to Kaliyuga and also ending one entire cycle of the Yugas. But in the novel, Taarak Vakil is misguided by his teacher *Mataji* and is portrayed as the villain and a killer of researchers researching on the existence of Lord Krishna and Dwarka. In short, Taarak Vakil is a distorted portrayal of the Kalki avatar.

Similarly, in *Keepers of the Kalachakra* the multiple characters reflect the cyclical reincarnation according to Buddhist and Hindu beliefs. Sanghi writes about the character of Brahmananda who appears not as "multiple hazy figures" to Vijay. (Sanghi, Keepers of the Kalachakra, 323)

Conclusion

In *The Krishna Key* and *Keepers of the Kalachakra*, Ashwin Sanghi performs a postmodern retelling of Indian mythology where myths are neither sacred relics nor discarded fictions but dynamic cultural codes, which retell the old beliefs. Through reinterpretation, he bridges the gap between ancient beliefs believed to be myths and modernity. His characters and the symbols bridge the gap between past and present, as he molds his characters and designs the symbols based on already existing characters and symbols from the Mahabharata or mentioned in Buddhist texts. He also challenges binary oppositions of faith and reason by posing them as two sides of the same coin and repositions Indian mythology within a global philosophical and scientific discourse. Sanghi's work thus exemplifies how mythic retelling in contemporary Indian literature serves not merely as nostalgia for the past, but as a quest for meaning in an age of uncertainty.

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The Endangered Ritualistic-language of the Zizis (Shamans) of the Shertukpen Tribe of India

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Abstract

West Kameng District of Arunachal Pradesh, located in the north-eastern region of the Indian subcontinent is a home to six major indigenous tribes. The Shertukpens are one among the indigenous tribes that inhabit the southern part of the district. The Shertukpens exhibit an interesting blend of Mahayana Buddhism and indigenous belief system known as Bon. This indigenous belief system which predates Buddhism remains central to their socio-religious life and are characterized by ceremonies and rituals administered by specialized priests called zizis. The rituals and ceremonies involving trance, divination, healing, and protection from malevolent forces require the recitation of hymns using an esoteric and archaic ritualistic language that is incoherent to the general community. This chanting is believed to facilitate communication between the zizi and the deities inhabiting the mystical realms and guarding the Shertukpen country.

The zizis in Shertukpen tribe are categorized into Chandzizi and Khikzizi on the basis of their mode of ordainment. While the Chandzizis are considered divinely chosen through series of dreams and visions imparted by tutelary deities, the Khikzizis undergo a prolonged process of apprenticeship. Both are considered divinely chosen and after attaining certain level of expertise both are formally recognized, following which, both are believed to receive spiritual authority from the mythical mountain deity Sungkhit. Further, the Khikzizis are entrusted to performing major community rituals tied to the ritual calendar. Both categories of zizis play a crucial role at the community and household levels, administering rites for healing, protection, and collective well-being.

In the recent years, the number of practicing zizis has declined sharply. This decline is attributed to several factors including the pressures of modernization, stringent ritual obligations, non-remunerative nature of priesthood, and waning interest among the younger generation. The decline poses a serious threat to the existence of the archaic ritualistic language and the associated oral tradition, which constitute an important component of the Shertukpens' intangible cultural heritage and religious-identity.

Employing ethnographic methods such as participant observation, and interviews with zizis, village elders, and traditional council members, the present study aims to contribute to the preservation of an endangered indigenous belief system and its ritual language. Documentation and interpretation of the significance of the rituals performed by the Khikzizis constitutes an important component of the study. The study also explored the initiatives undertaken by the community for promotion and preservation of zizi-culture. Measures involving textual transliteration of the chants/ritualistic language, audio-visual documentation of rituals, mechanisms to formally recognize these priests by the Government with proper honorarium, formal apprenticeship workshops and programmes are highly recommended on the basis of the findings of the present study.

Keywords**: **Shertukpen, Khikzizi, Chandzizi, ritualistic-language, socio-religious identity

Introduction

Shertukpen, an indigenous tribe, numbering around three thousand five hundred people (Census, 2011) are settled in the southern part of *West Kameng District*, *Arunachal Pradesh* in north-eastern corner of *Indian sub-continent*. They comprise two consanguineous groups; *Shenjis* (*Sher*), who inhabit the *Shergaon* village and *Thonjis (Tukpen)* inhabiting *Rupa* and adjacent villages. They like to identify themselves as '*Mey*' and speak '*Mey-Nyuk*' which belongs to *Tibeto-Burmese* language family. Minor variations exist in this language even within the *Shertukpen* villages. However, notable differences occur in this language between the *Shenjis* and *Thonjis* in terms of tone and accent. To the north-east of their present land, a similar

language is spoken amongst another distinct tribe, the *Shartang*, with whom common ancestral lineage is claimed (Megejee, 2017).

Shertukpens follow *Mahayana-Buddhism* and also practice indigenous beliefs called *'Bon'*. In fact, the practice of indigenous belief systems amongst them prevailed even before they turned into *Buddhists* (Sarkar, 1980). The priests in *Buddhism* are the monks or *Lamas* whereas, the priests or shamans called *zizis* are the main custodian of their *Bon* religion. The *Buddhist Lamas* perform rituals by chanting the religious texts written in *Bhoti* (Tibetan) script. On the other hand, the *zizis* are required to perform the rituals by chanting in a dialect incoherent to the common men. The chanting is not recorded in any scripted form and hence, the *zizis* learn them by rote. These incantations are believed to be the language of communication between the *zizis* and nature-deities (Thongchi, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

In *Shertukpen* society, the main practitioners of *Bon* religion i.e. the *zizis* are broadly categorized into two types on the basis of their ordainment; the *Chandzizi* and *Khikzizi*. The *Chandizizis* are the chosen ones of their respective tutelary deities called the *armus.* They are taught the nuances of a *zizi* in a series of dreams and visions by the *armus*, who are believed to be beautiful nymphs. *Zizis* claim that they are married to these *armus* in their preternatural world. Any person who possesses shamanistic instincts and behavioural traits of a *zizi* can be chosen by the deity for the role irrespective of the clan, status, sex and age. More often, any person who has had the family history of being a *zizi* is likely to be chosen. On the other hand, *Khikzizis* are inducted into priesthood after undergoing years of apprenticeship under a master and formal recognition by the traditional council called *Blu* (Megeji et.al). However, the role of *Khikzizis* is entrusted upon two particular clans *Dingla* and *Megeji* since time immemorial. Upon gaining some insights into the nuances of a *Khikzizi*, the person is said to be accepted as his heir by the most powerful mythical mountain-deity, *Sungkhit*. The *Khikzizi* is allocated with *armus* for guidance and incorporeal warriors called *makfeyns* (warrior-deities) for protection by the *Sungkhit*.

It is interesting to note that the incantations of the *zizi* involve a dialect beyond the comprehension of common people. The *zizis* during trance rituals use this archaic language to communicate with the deities and beings of mystical realms. The divinely messages are disseminated through an elderly person (*Changmepo*) who is specialized in assisting *zizis* during trance rituals. The *zizi* on regaining consciousness after completion of the ritual is unable to recount the incantations and prophecies. In addition to following Buddhism, the *Shertukpens* still continue to invoke and appease the nature-gods through *zizis*. Thus, *zizis* are essential to the sustenance of the unique socio-religious values with which the *Shertukpens* are identified with.

Aims and Objectives

In the light of above-mentioned facts, the present study has been carried out with an aim to:

1. Document and interpret the significance of the rituals performed by the *Khikzizis*.
2. Explore the initiatives undertaken by the community for promotion and preservation of *zizi*-culture.
3. Suggest measures for preservation of endangered ritualistic language of the *zizis*.

Methodology

A comprehensive and multi-faceted methodology has been adopted to effectively preserve and understand the archaic dialect of the *Shertukpen zizis* and its profound role in their socio-religious identity. The researchers have extensively collected oral materials used by the *zizis* during their rituals through participant observation method. Audio and video recording of the ritualistic performances were done. In depth interviews with the *zizi*s and village and council members were conducted to explore the challenges the *zizis* face in preserving their tradition and their perspectives on the declining number of *zizi*s. Interview with the *zizi*s and community leaders offered the perspectives on their role in preserving the archaic dialect and *Bon* belief system.

Findings: Role of the *Zizis*

The incoherent language used by the *zizis* is in the form of chants during the performance of various rites. Following is an account of rites performed by the *zizis*:

Ritualistic Practices

Numerous rites are to be administered and performed by both the categories of *zizis*. Services of both *Chandzizi* and *Khikzizi* are sought at household level to perform rites. In addition to performing rites at household level, the *Khikzizis* are required to perform rites annually under the supervision of the *Blu* (*Traditional Council*) to ensure well-being of the community.

Household Level Rites

Phudoh Sonba: *Phudoh Sonba* is performed before the twentieth day of the local month to offer gratitude to the mountain-deities that protect the household members, crops and livestock. This is mandatory ritual in order to perform other important rites.

Yaam Hibah: This rite is performed to appease the spirits that inflict diseases to any household member. Literally, *Yaam* refers to the house and *Hibah* means to observe. Post performance of this ritual, the house is quarantined and outsiders are prohibited to enter the house for the next two days. The ailing person should strictly avoid going outside the house while the family members cannot go far. A cross made of wood called *mamfla* is erected at the main entrance to symbolize that the ritual has been carried out. It is also believed that *mamfla* acts as repellant to the malicious elements.

Sungkhit Sakpo Chhopah: This rite is performed to apprise, seek consent and blessings from the main patron deity, the *Sungkhit*, for performing *Yaam Hibah* ritual.

Yung Lubah: *Shertukpens* are of belief that the soul of a person goes out of his body for a brief moment when he gets frightened or shocked. Such souls are sometimes held captive by the evil spirits as a result of which the person becomes weak and sick for a prolonged period. So, in order to recover the lost soul, this rite is performed.

Sog Shing Sonbah: *Sog Shing Sonbah* is conducted to enhance the life span of an ailing person or to invigorate the life of a person who had been affected by prolonged illness. It is often preceded by *yunglubah* rite.

Yaam Chhag Mohpah: *Yaam Chhag Mohpah*is a rite performed to expel the malevolent entities like the *brangbrokshing* that take refuge in the house and cause troubles by inflicting diseases, quarrels and restlessness.

Hah Nyatpah: It is a kind of exorcism performed to evict the wandering soul of a dead person and lead it to netherworld. The *Zizi*, during this rite, allows the dead soul to transmigrate to his body and confess the sorrows and grievances of the dead person. At the end of the rite, the dead soul is offered with the edibles and are directed to leave the living-world.

Lui Sakpa Chhopa: *Lui Sakpa Chhopa* rite is carried out to propitiate the benevolent spirits called *lui* whose sacredness has been dishonored by rendering their place dirty due to the activities of the people.

Khryuichhyeuh: The *Zizis* treat the people suffering from epilepsy (*xo nyoba*) or other neurological disorders (*luineyzohney*) using sanctified water therapy.

Images: Zizi pouring Khryuichhyeuh (sanctified water)

Lograng Mohpah: *Lograng Mohpah* is a rite performed for the well-being of the new born baby.

Jie-e Sur Ribah: This rite is performed to ward off the soul of a dead person that has transmigrated into a person's body.

Mik Khehpah and Luing Khehpah: These rites are performed in order to cure people of excruciating pain in the muscles and joints which are believed to be perpetrated by the children of the deities during their play.

Thambu Lanbah: *Thambu Lanbah* is a kind of divination to determine the type of disease, cause of disease, whereabout of lost articles or person by throwing dice or examining the yolk of boiled eggs.

Community Level Rites

Dingphon Sonba: This annual ceremony is performed for the peace and prosperity of the entire *Shertukpen* community by the *Khikzizis* at various sacred stones in *Rupa* village.

Phhot Tyoenbah: This annual rite is performed at a designated place called '*Lohblang*' in Rupa village by the *Khikzizis* in order to offer undefiled maize crop to all the guardian deities. *Lhoblang* literally means the abode (*blang*) of deities (*Loh*). The *Shertukpens* are allowed to harvest their maize-crops only after this rite has been performed.

Image: Oblatory-items during *Phhot Tyoenbah*

Phiyaw Tyoenbah: It is the annual rite administered by the *Khikzizis* to offer first harvest of millets to the guardian deities at *Lohblang*.

Thongdok Rek Phuikma: It is an annual ceremony conducted under the supervision of *Khikzizis* that involves ploughing and sowing of millets in designated agricultural field by one of the members of *Thongdok* clan for successful agricultural season. It is only after this ceremony that the *Shertukpens* start cultivating their fields.

Khiksaba: *Khiksaba* is a weeklong rite cum festival of the *Shertukpens* which is performed to worship and propitiate the mountain deities. The *Khikzizis* along with other participants are involved in carrying out elaborate rituals at various scared places during this festival.

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Image 1:*Zizis plaiting nine sacred threads into one during a Khiksaba ritual.*

Image 2: *Zizi offering oblation to the guardian-deities during Khiksaba ritual.*

Major Concerns

The role of the *zizis* in the present-day context has however undergone some limitations. Although the role of *zizis* remains persistent at the community level, however their role in the household level seems to have declined owing to the availability and accessibility of modern medical facilities in nearby regions. Another major concern is the dwindling numbers of *zizi*s in *Shertukpen* villages. This decline is primarily attributed to the reluctance among the younger generation to embrace the challenging role of a *zizi*. The implications of this trend are profound, as it poses a serious threat to the continuity of the archaic dialect and, by extension, the entire *Bon* belief system. Currently, the number of *zizis* has declined to a great extent since

the younger generation is not ready to take up the role of their predecessors. Amongst many reasons, the strict food habit a *zizi* has to follow, dissuades the people from turning into *zizis*. There are people who strongly defy and resist the signs of becoming a *zizi* by consuming prohibited food-items such as garlic, onion and pork. During the course of the study, some *zizis* responded that they face myriads of challenges which further discourage individuals from taking up this sacred role. These challenges include strict dietary restrictions that go against modern culinary practices and the necessity to forgo educational and career opportunities. Though, formal recognition through Government initiatives by paying honorarium has been started but the aid does not suffice their needs. The sacrifices demanded by the role of a *zizi* deter potential successors. In the modern times, the profession of a *zizi* is non-remunerative except getting a meager quantity of ration or lump sum amount of money.

The Council heads and village elders, during the interviews, raised their concern about the threat to the *Bon* Belief System. Modernization is identified as a significant contributing factor to the gradual erosion of the *Bon* belief system within the *Shertukpen* tribe. The dwindling number of *zizis* and the oral nature of the tradition make it exceptionally vulnerable to this impact. The *Bon* belief system, deeply intertwined with the archaic language, faces an uncertain future. Hence, they are of the opinion that a systematic approach must be undertaken for the continuity and preservation of the traditional belief system. The concerned members of the community realize the critical importance of documenting the intangible cultural heritage of the *Shertukpen* tribe. This documentation extends beyond language and rituals; it encompasses the very essence of their socio-religious identity. Preserving this heritage is not merely an academic endeavor but a cultural imperative to ensure that future generations can understand, appreciate, and carry forward the rich legacy of their ancestors.

Suggestive measures

Having unearthed these critical findings, the next logical step is to explore preservation efforts and future directions for safeguarding the cultural heritage of the *Shertukpen* tribe:

1. Archival Efforts: The preservation of the archaic dialect hinges on meticulous archival efforts. Oral materials collected during the research, including incantations and chants should be cataloged and stored in a secure archival repository. These documents are not only linguistic artifacts but also cultural treasures that must be protected for posterity. For this, a field work was conducted for observation and recording of the events during the *Khiksaba* festival. The ritualistic chanting were recorded and documented in the written form by using *Devanagri* script as the Roman script was not sufficient to transcribe some of the sounds.
2. Digital Preservation: In an age of digital technology, the digitization of recorded materials, including audio and video recordings of *zizi* rituals, becomes imperative. These digital archives can serve as accessible repositories for future research and educational purposes.
3. Community Education: Empowering the *Shertukpen* community with knowledge about the significance of their cultural heritage is paramount. Educational initiatives, workshops, and awareness programs can help instill pride in their traditions, encouraging younger generations to take an interest in preserving the Bon belief system and the archaic dialect.
4. Collaborative Documentation: Collaboration with linguists and cultural preservation experts is essential. Establishing partnerships with academic institutions and cultural organizations can provide the *Shertukpen* community with access to resources and expertise necessary for comprehensive documentation and preservation.
5. Oral History Projects: The elder members of the Shertukpen community possess invaluable oral history. Initiatives to capture their narratives, anecdotes, and memories related to the archaic dialect and *zizi* practices can contribute significantly to cultural preservation efforts.
6. Supporting *Zizi*s: Recognizing the challenges faced by *zizis*, efforts should be made to provide them with support and recognition. This may include financial assistance, educational opportunities, and measures to alleviate the dietary restrictions that deter potential successors.

7. Cultural Revival: Promoting cultural revival through festivals, performances, and community gatherings can help rejuvenate interest in the Bon belief system and the archaic dialect. Celebrating and showcasing these traditions can attract both community members and external audiences.
8. Advocacy and Policy: Advocacy at regional and national levels is necessary to highlight the cultural significance of the *Shertukpen* heritage. Advocates can work to influence policy decisions that support the preservation of indigenous cultures and languages.

Conclusion

This comprehensive study serves as an in-depth exploration of the *Shertukpen Zizis*' role in preserving their archaic dialect and the *Bon* belief system. It reveals not only the profound significance of language in their rituals but also the urgent need to address the challenges threatening their cultural heritage. The findings emphasize the necessity of proactive measures and community involvement to safeguard these unique traditions for generations to come. With the advent of modernization, the *Bon* as a belief system is dying a slow death which is a serious concern for the entire *Shertukpen* tribe. Since the tradition is mostly oral in nature, it makes it all the more difficult to preserve the cultural and ritualistic practices. All these reasons make it imperative to carry out proper research and document the oral ritualistic tradition along with its archaic language so that the indigenous faith is not lost.

As we explore the *Shertukpen* narrative, we encounter a pressing reality—the vulnerability of their ritualistic archaic language poses a direct threat to the very essence of their indigenous identity. The echo of their chants and the resonance of their linguistic expressions are at risk of fading into silence posing a tangible threat, echoing a global concern shared by indigenous communities worldwide. Scholars such as *Megejee* and *Sarkar* provide a contextual backdrop, illuminating the challenges faced by tribes like *Shertukpen*. Yet, amid the shadows of potential linguistic loss, there emerges a narrative of resilience and hope as the *Shertukpen* embark on strategies to revitalize and safeguard their unique linguistic legacy.

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Comparative Analysis of Myths Across Nations and Cultures and Exploring Their Shared Themes and Unique Narratives

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Abstract

Mythology has always been an integral part of human civilization, serves as a connecting tool like bridge, connecting cultures, traditions, and belief systems.

Myths have always been part of how people make an understanding of the world. No matter where they belong from whether it's ancient Greece, India, Africa, or the Americas—myths dig deep into questions of creation, heroism, right and wrong, death, and the supernatural. In this paper, I look at myths from the perspective of several cultures like Greek, Norse, Egyptian, Hindu, Native American, and African and I aim to spot the big ideas and characters that show up again and again that the hero on a journey, gods interfering in human matters, the cosmic order, and the clever trickster. But myths are never just copies of each other. Each culture has its own style, shaped by its background, location, and beliefs. I also touch on how these old stories which are still mentioned in today's books, films, and psychology. In the end, I argue that myths, for all their differences, show how humans everywhere try to figure out life and the world around them and that's why they still matter.

Keywords*: mythology, cultural narratives, myth and society*

Introduction

Stories came before science are called myths. Long before anyone have started measuring the stars or mapping the seas, people used myths to explain natural activities like thunderstorms, the cycle of seasons, and why we die. These stories weren't just part of entertainment but for many, myths were the blueprint for living and teaching people where they actually came from, who they were, and what their lives meant.

Looking at myths side by side, one can start to notice patterns. Even though the details changes from place to place, the big questions stay much similar that is Why are we here? What happens when we die? What makes a hero? This paper compares myths from different angles of the world, looking for those threads that tie them together, and also for the things that make each tradition stand out.

Research Methodology

This research paper uses a qualitative and comparative approach based on secondary sources such as books, translations of myths, and scholarly writings. Myths from different cultures are compared to identify shared themes and cultural differences.

Review of Literature

Scholars from different disciplines have extensively studied mythology. According to Mircea Eliade, in her book Myth and Reality, she says that myths are sacred stories that reveals many fundamental truths about the human existence and experience. He says that myths are not fictional tales but are meaningful stories that shape cultural and spiritual life.

Indian scholars like Radhakrishnan and Devdutt Pattanaik emphasises on dharma, karma and rebirth,Joseph Campbell introduces the concept of the hero's journey.

The Role of Myths in Human Society

In the old days, if a person wanted to know where people came from they would listened to a story. Myths were memory-keepers that were passed down through values, beliefs and even warnings from one generation to the next. In societies where hardly anyone wrote things down, stories did the heavy lifting.

Myths also took on the big mysteries like why the sun rises, what causes floods, or why there's suffering in society. Gods and spirits stepped in where science couldn't and myths weren't just about other worlds but they shaped this one, too.

Human kind Creation - Myths

In Greece, everything begins with Chaos. In India, creation of human kind comes from the cosmic egg where it is believed that evolution of human beings was from a an egg, so there's something universal about wanting to explain how it all began.

Death and What Comes Next

Death is like a mystery that everyone fights with. In Egypt, the afterlife comes with judgment and the hope of paradise, if one lived right. Other myths promise rebirth, or warns terrifying punishments. Myths give structure to our fears and hopes about what happens after the end of life.

The Trickster

In many cultures we can see there are many characters who do not follow rules and their behavior is also quite different like Loki in Norse mythology, Coyote with Native American stories, Krishna playing pranks in Indian epics tales. Tricksters often challenges the authority and break rules. Sometimes they are punished, sometimes rewarded. Tricksters , Keeps mythological world unpredictable.

Unique Narratives that are Shaped by Culture

Each mythology is said to be a reflection of the world where it developed in. For example the Greeks have interest in intelligence, debate and individuality, so their gods quarrel, make mistakes and behave like humans. In India stories are told through long epics like Mahabharata or Ramayana where focus is more on dharma (duty) and spiritual growth. The boundary between god and human id often unclear.

Egyptian mythologies focuses on repetition and renewal. The cycles the sun rise and being set, the river flooding and retreating, which mirrors the rhythms of the Nile and determines Egyptian life. African myths are often focused to the community life and also balance with the nature and the spirits and ancestors guiding daily life. Native American stories, tie people to the land and teach respect for the forces around them.

Why Myths Stick Around

Myths never disappears, they just change shape and fits as the need of present-day. We see echoes of old heroes in comic books, or ancient tricksters in modern films. Psychologists like Jung and Campbell have borrowed mythic ideas to talk about the mind and personal growth. Even today, big questions is where we come from, what's right and wrong, what happens after death—still show up in stories, art, and everyday conversation.

Myths help us to make sense of chaos, they offers comfort, challenge, and a sense of belongingness and they remind us that, whatever our differences are we're all asking the same questions.

Findings

The research shows that myths across the cultures shares some common themes like creation, heroism, morality, and death. However, each culture presents these themes in a very unique and varried ways that is shaped by its traditions and environment. Myths continues to influence modern thought and holds the culture of different nations in it.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant, as it helps in analysing myths as shared human narratives rather than just isolated cultural stories. By comparing myths from across the nations, the research paper highlights both universal human concerns and cultural diversity. The study also shows the continued relevance of myths in modern literature

Conclusion

Myths are said to be a part of human culture. An analysis of myths from different nations studies that while cultures are different, human thoughts and emotions are similar. Myths often connects humanity across time and space. Study of myths helps us understand ancient societies and also ourselves. Due to the shared heritage of humankind and the timeless nature of storytelling.They helps us explain the world, teach values, and preserve the tradition.

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Mythological Representation in Graham Masterton's Basilisk

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Abstract :

Literature has long been interested in the difference between myth and reality. They have altered over time to show the anxieties and beliefs of each literary period. Myths are not just ancient tales in contemporary literature; rather, they aid in our comprehension of the problems and fears of the present. These myths are particularly well-reimagined in horror literature. The book Basilisk by Graham Masterton is a prime illustration of this tendency. The study argues does not merely employ myth as a supernatural horror device but transforms it into a critical lens for examining contemporary fears, epistemological uncertainty, and human vulnerability. The Basilisk myth serves as a symbolic force that highlights the limitations of scientific explanations when confronted with phenomena that defy rational categorization. This paper further analyses how fear in Basilisk operates not only at a physical level but also as a psychological and social contagion, spreading through narratives, media, and collective imagination. In this context, myth becomes a form of cultural memory that resurfaces during moments of crisis, revealing society's continued reliance on symbolic narratives to make sense of catastrophe. By situating an ancient myth within a contemporary setting, Masterton underscores the coexistence and conflict between myth and rationality. Ultimately, this research concludes that Basilisk demonstrates the enduring relevance of myth in modern literature. Mythological representation in the novel serves to question the boundaries between science and belief, rationality and fear, suggesting that myths remain essential tools for understanding realities that lie beyond purely scientific explanation.

Keywords: *Myths, collective imagination, co-existence.*

Introduction:

Graham Masterton is mainly recognized for his horror novels, but he is also most famous for being a prolific writer of thrillers, historical epics, disaster novels, and one of the world's most influential series of sex instruction books. He is mainly recognized for his horror novels, but he has also been a prolific writer of thrillers, disaster novels and historical epics, as well as one of the world's most influential series of sex instruction books.

Mythology and Reality have always been an important theme in literature. "*Myths are traditional narratives that explain natural phenomena, human behaviour, or cultural beliefs through symbolic stories involving gods, heroes, or supernatural events. They convey moral values and collective truths rather than historical facts.*" (Barry 32). Myths are age-old stories passed down through generations to make sense of the world, human actions, and the customs of different cultures. These tales often feature deities, legendary figures, or extraordinary happenings, using symbolism to express ideas and beliefs. Rather than providing a factual record, myths serve to communicate shared values, ethical lessons, and explanations that unite communities. In addition to their storytelling function, myths help shape cultural identity and offer insight into how people understood their environment and themselves.

Myths have never remained static cultural relics limited only to ancient civilisations. On the contrary, they have continually evolved, adapting to the fears, anxieties, and beliefs of each era. In contemporary literature, myths do not appear merely as distant legends; instead, they re-emerge as active frameworks used to interpret the crises, uncertainties, and psychological fears of modern society. Horror fiction, in particular, has proven to be a highly effective domain for the reconstruction of mythical narratives. In this context, Graham Masterton's novel *'Basilisk'* serves as a powerful example of this phenomenon.

A qualitative and interpretive approach is used in this study to examine Graham Masterton's Basilisk. The novel '*Basilisk'* serves as the main source of information, with secondary sources on mythology, horror theory, and cultural studies providing additional support. Character representations, narrative patterns, and mythological symbols are all examined using a textual analysis approach. The study finds binary oppositions between myth and science using structuralist analysis and myth theory. Fear, monstrosity, and the unconscious aspects of the basilisk figure are examined using psychoanalytic criticism. Myth is shaped by power, belief, and knowledge, which can be evaluated through cultural and ideological analysis. The modern significance of myth in the book is revealed by interpreting the findings through close reading and theoretical synthesis.

Review of Literature

Graham Masterton's '*Basilisk*' skillfully incorporates mythological elements into a modern horror story, heavily referencing old myths about the basilisk as a deadly, supernatural beast. The literature that examines this work frequently emphasises how Masterton blends folklore with contemporary psychological terror, reviving classical mythology to arouse primal fears. The novel's use of myth as a metaphor for hidden evil and human confrontation with the unknown is noted by scholars, who emphasise how it reinforces ageless themes of power, death, and transformation in a contemporary setting.

Critical discussions of mythological representation emphasise that myths function less as records of historical events and more as symbolic narratives that express collective beliefs and shared moral truths. As Peter Barry explains, myths serve to transmit cultural values and ethical frameworks that help communities maintain coherence, especially during periods of uncertainty (Barry). In contemporary horror literature, such mythic structures often re-emerge during moments of crisis, operating as a form of cultural memory through which societies attempt to interpret catastrophe. This resurgence of myth can also be understood through Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, which argues that meaning becomes unstable when boundaries between the rational and the irrational, the scientific and the supernatural, begin to collapse (Kristeva). Similarly, Hélène Cixous's call to "write yourself" foregrounds embodied and marginalized forms of knowledge, suggesting that truth may emerge from bodily experience rather than institutional discourse alone (Cixous). These theoretical perspectives resonate strongly with Graham Masterton's *Basilisk*, which reimagines an ancient mythical creature traditionally depicted as a serpent king whose gaze causes death within a modern scientific context, thereby staging a conflict between mythic belief and rational explanation.

Objectives:

1. To analyze the depiction of mythological elements within Basilisk.
2. To examine the evolution of the traditional Basilisk myth within a contemporary scientific and techn ological framework.
3. To investigate how modern anxieties, crises, and uncertainties are reflected in legendary iconography.
4. To comprehend how myth functions in the novel to challenge the bounds of scientific knowledge.
5. To demonstrate how "Basilisk" uses horror literature to connect folklore and contemporary reality

Graham Masterton changes this dynamic in *'Basilisk'* by demanding proof of the grotesque and the fantastic. The novel follows Professor Nathan Underhill, a research zoologist at the Philadelphia Zoo. He works on a Cryptozoology project, aiming to prove that mythical hybrids, like gryphons and basilisks, all existed at some point and can be recreated using genetic formulas. Nathan wants to use these creatures embryonic stem cells to cure serious diseases like Alzheimer's, cystic fibrosis, and multiple sclerosis. However, the scientific community mocks him, labelling him a New-Age lunatic and a snake-oil salesman. The main conflict arises when Nathan meets Doctor Zauber, the enigmatic director of the Murdstone Rest Home. Zauber has ancient knowledge that allows him to overcome the biological challenges that thwarted Nathan's first experiment, successfully bringing a basilisk to life. By blending advanced molecular biology

with rituals from medieval texts and shamans, Basilisk argues that the truths in ancient myths are frighteningly real, needing only the right but unethical methods to become physical.

In European bestiaries and legends, a basilisk is a legendary reptile reputed to be a serpent king, who causes death to those who look into its eyes. According to the naturalis historia of Pliny the Elder, *"the basilisk of Cyrene is a small snake, not more than twelve inches in length, that is so venomous, it leaves a wide trail of deadly venom in its path, and its gaze is likewise lethal".* (Dictionary.com. 2018). The novel shifts from theoretical possibility to deadly certainty with the introduction of the *Basilisk*, a creature Masterton describes in great detail, linking it to both ancient myths and measurable biology. Historical texts, such as those of Pliny the Elder, state that the basilisk, meaning little king because of its crown, kills instantly just by meeting its gaze. This mythological effect is confirmed by the death of Doris Bellman at the Murdstone Rest Home, where Grace Underhill observes that everything living in the room, including ivy plants, Mrs. Bellman's cockatoo (Harpo), and even blowflies, dies simultaneously, echoing a phenomenon noted in Bishop Wincenty Kadłubek's Czarny Książka (The Black Book). Nathan confirms the creature's hybrid nature, the heart of his Cee-Zee research, when he examines a broken horn fragment found near Mrs Bellman's room. DNA results reveal that the basilisk comprises three genetic codes: part mammal, part bird, and part reptile, a combination unique to this mythical species. The seemingly magical death stare also has a scientific explanation. Later analysis of the basilisk's eye fluid shows it contains luciferase enzyme, the same chemical that makes fireflies glow. Kristeva explains that abjection is what *"does not respect borders, positions, rules"* (Kristeva 4). When social boundaries become unclear, myths stand out and gain strength. In the basilisk's concentration, it creates a light that can shock any living cell into total paralysis and death. Thus, Masterton unravels the myth that the basilisk is a biological hybrid with a lethal ability that stems from extreme, genetically programmed phototoxicity.

Truths the reality discovered by the characters in the sources. Science Meets Legend, Nathan Underhill is dedicated to proving mythology through genetic science, a pursuit he believes is essential for human progress. His belief is grounded in a mountain of documentary evidence stretching back to Sumerian times, including drawings by Albrecht Dürer (1513) and accounts of creature behaviour. He sees these beings not as supernatural but as biological entities whose potential, especially their embryonic stem cells, could transform medicine by providing cures for serious conditions such as multiple sclerosis, Huntington's disease, and cerebral palsy. However, the limits of conventional science become clear when Nathan's five-year attempt to hatch a gryphon egg fails. He manages to fertilise the egg and keeps the embryo alive until it is full-grown, but the creature dies just before hatching. When he cracks the shell with a hammer, he discovers a shocking truth: the embryo is eighty per cent putrefied, suffering from severe necrosis, even though its heart was beating more than four times faster than a human heartbeat until its death.

Contemporary scientific perspectives suggest that, if such creatures existed, their birth would be possible only through in vitro fertilisation or egg transplantation. However, scientific intervention alone is insufficient. Sources indicate that these entities exist halfway between the real and the unreal. While genetics provides the physical structure, they require life energy, or a soul, to develop without deformity. Dr. Zauber's research indicates that these hybrids must consume the vitality of living beings, particularly the vibrant souls of humans, to survive. Folklore claims that a single mirror can reflect the basilisk's gaze and destroy it. In reality, a single mirror may deflect the light and protect the user, but it is insufficient to kill the creature. An ancient Polish ritual prescribes an array of five mirrors to generate a specific reflected light pattern for effective defence. Additionally, the only reliable cure for the basilisk's stare is its own optic fluid, which serves as an antidote to reverse neurological shock. While myth emphasizes the destructive flash of light, the underlying reality lies in the creature's internal mechanisms, specifically the enzymes and optic fluid that enable the lethal beam. Folklore thus serves as a cautionary guide to a highly volatile biological phenomenon.

In *Basilisk*, mythological creatures are presented as biological realities rather than mere legends. Evidence within the narrative, including skeletal remains discovered in the Gobi Desert, suggests that such beings once existed. Professor Nathan Underhill demonstrates that these creatures can be scientifically

reconstructed when he successfully breeds a gryphon embryo using genetic formulas and mitochondrial DNA. However, the novel also exposes the limits of science. While Nathan relies on molecular biology, Zauber succeeds in creating the basilisk because he possesses what science lacks: life-energy. Hélène Cixous said in the essay *The Laugh of the Medusa*. *"Write yourself: your body must be heard"* (Hélène Cixous 880). encourages us to notice stories rooted in the body that official language might miss. When communities face a physical disaster, they must decide whether to respond with scientific, legal, or folkloric language. How these languages interact shapes what people accept as truth. In this context, Masterton's Basilisk serves as both a warning and a way to analyse these issues. Myths are not just barriers to reason; they are tools that shape how societies see, value, and act when facing the unknown. Zauber argues that mythical creatures exist between the real and the unreal and cannot survive on ordinary nourishment. Instead, they feed on the souls and beliefs of humans. His methods draw on medieval and occult traditions, sharply contrasting with modern genetics. Zauber's use of ancient knowledge, including practices described by the medieval scholar Albertus Magnus, leads to horrifying outcomes such as the transformation of Richard Scryman into a monstrous hybrid. This fusion of advanced genetics and dark alchemy reveals the novel's central truth: mythological reality in *'Basilisk*' requires both scientific brilliance and the disturbing acceptance of evil.

Myth Historically, creatures such as the gryphon, basilisk, and hippogryph are considered empty fiction, wrought by magic lore, or symbolic entities from the Sumerian and Medieval periods. According to Ronald Barth, *"myth transforms history into nature."* (Barth129). Masterton ensures that even in the face of the *'Basilisk',* mythological wisdom remains crucial. Nathan initially tries to defend himself and Grace with a small circular shaving mirror. He follows ancient folk legends that state the only way to defeat a basilisk is by reflecting its deadly gaze at it. While the single mirror doesn't destroy the creature, Nathan sees that its surface is discoloured and shiny black after the encounter, hinting that it partially deflected the basilisk's deadly energy. Guided by Polish mystic Zofia Czarwonica, Nathan learns that five mirrors arranged to form a terrible vortex are needed to neutralise the *Basilisk* effectively. In the climax, Nathan, Denver, and Patti use mirrors to incapacitate the *Basilisk* during their confrontation in the hidden Kraków lab. Crucially, Nathan realises that the cure for the Basilisk's shock might come from the source of its venom. After Denver blinds the basilisk by stabbing its eyes with a brass poker, Nathan collects the creature's glowing optic fluid. Having gone through the basilisk's paralysing glare and accidentally swallowing some of the fluid that cured him, Nathan takes the risk of spooning the substance down the throat of Rafał Jasłewicz, who had been struck into catatonic shock by the creature's gaze. This method successfully revives Rafał. Armed with this scientific and mythological solution, Nathan returns to Hahnemann University Hospital. He gives the optic fluid to Grace, waking her from her coma and achieving the cure that Zauber had offered at the cost of murder. Nathan's successful use of the basilisk's own biological essence as an antidote to a venom-as-antivenom paradox accomplishes his original humanitarian goal without yielding to Zauber's immoral demands. He returns to his domestic life, having learned that one "*shouldn't try to be smarter than God."* (Graham Masterton 45)

Conclusion:

'"Basilisk" delves deeply into how cultural mythology exposes biological facts with terrifying ramifications when confronted with the boundaries of modern science, reveals biological truths with frightening implications. Graham Masterton shows that legendary creatures are not the opposite of reality. Instead, they are products of a deep, if hidden, understanding of genetics sustained by mystical energy sources. The main lesson of the novel lies in the human factors needed for this process: Zauber's capacity for evil, Richard's desire for immortality, and Nathan's drive for medical breakthroughs. Nathan ultimately rejects Zauber's path. He chooses moral integrity over the eye-catching potential of hybrid creation. This choice is represented by his receipt of The Book of Stones, an ancient text of alchemy, with a promise to never tamper with Cee-Zee creatures again. Masterton shows that the myth of the basilisk might represent a

real biological truth. Chasing that truth without ethics leads inevitably to destruction and death. The reality is that absolute knowledge requires absolute power, a power that demands the cost of the human soul.

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Myths and Truths in Sri Aurobindo's Grand Epic Poem *Savitri*

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Abstract

Sri Aurobindo's Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol is an epic poem that transcends the traditional boundaries of myth and metaphysical truth. Drawing upon the ancient Indian story of Savitri and Satyavan from the Mahabharata, Aurobindo re-imagines it as a cosmic drama of human evolution, spiritual conquest, and the realization of the divine in terrestrial life. This paper explores how Aurobindo employs mythological narrative as a symbolic framework to convey deeper truths about consciousness, suffering, destiny, and spiritual realization. It argues that while the poem preserves the mythic structure, it radically transforms it into a philosophical and mystical vision that challenges the reader to perceive myth not as mere fiction but as a vehicle for profound truth. The interplay of myth and truth in Savitri reveals Aurobindo's unique poetic spirituality and his attempt to integrate Indian mythic tradition with universal metaphysical insights.

Keywords: *Aurobindo, Savitri, Satyavan, the Mahabharata, human evolution, spiritual conquest, mystical vision,myth and profound truth.*

Introduction

Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950), an Indian philosopher, poet, and yogi, conceived *Savitri* as an epic of spiritual transformation. Inspired by the tale of Savitri and Satyavan found in the Mahabharata, the poem expands the narrative into a 24,000-line metaphysical epic. Myth, for Aurobindo, is not an archaic narrative but a living symbolic form capable of expressing universal truths. This research paper examines the dual role of myth and truth in *Savitri*, investigating how Aurobindo reinterprets mythic material to articulate a philosophical vision that addresses both personal and cosmic dimensions of human existence.

1. Mythic Foundations in *Savitri*

The story of Savitri and Satyavan is rooted in Indian mythic tradition. In the Mahabharata, Savitri's love and determination compel Death (Yama) to grant her husband's life back. Aurobindo retains this core narrative but substantially enlarges its scope. He situates the myth within a cosmic struggle between light and darkness, inner and outer worlds, mortality and immortality.

Aurobindo's use of myth serves several purposes:

Cultural resonance: The familiar narrative provides a framework that resonates with readers versed in Indian epic traditions.

Symbolic language: Myth allows the poem to operate on multiple levels—literal, psychological, spiritual, and cosmic.

Universal significance: While rooted in Indian myth, the story addresses universal themes of love, suffering, and spiritual aspiration.

Thus, myth in *Savitri* is not static folklore but a dynamic structure for conveying existential and metaphysical truths.

2. Truths Conveyed Through Mythic Imagery

2.1 The Truth of Consciousness : Aurobindo's central philosophical concern is the evolution of consciousness. In *Savitri*, the journey of the heroine becomes symbolic of the soul's striving for higher consciousness. The mythic figures represent psychological and spiritual forces:

- Savitri symbolizes the dynamic power of spiritual will and aspiration.
- Satyavan embodies humanity's mortal condition.

- Death becomes not merely an entity but a metaphysical force that must be confronted and transformed.

The poem reveals that the struggle against death is the struggle for a consciousness that transcends the limitations of the finite self. Mythic imagery, therefore, becomes a vehicle for the truth of inner transformation.

2.2 The Truth of Love and Suffering

In *Savitri*, love is not merely emotional attachment; it is the motive power of spiritual evolution. Aurobindo transforms the mythic narrative of conjugal fidelity into an exploration of love as universal force. Suffering, too, is reframed not as punishment but as an instrument of growth. The mythic ordeal reflects truths about:

"The inevitability of suffering in human experience.
The potential for suffering to awaken deeper awareness.
The transformative power of self-giving love."

Thus, what appears as mythic drama unfolds as a profound meditation on the human condition.

3. Aurobindo's Mythopoeic Poetics

Aurobindo's poetic method—mythopoeia—involves creating an imaginative universe where mythic symbols convey multilayered truths. His language blends archaic diction with visionary metaphors:

- Repeated invocations to cosmic forces evoke the sacred.
- Symbolic landscapes (forests, mountains, oceans) represent inner psychological terrains.
- Structurally, *Savitri* does not adhere to a conventional narrative. Instead, it interweaves descriptive, philosophical, and dramatic modes. This blend reflects Aurobindo's conviction that myth must be expansive enough to encompass philosophical discourse and poetic insight. The poem's mythic structure thus becomes a scaffold for universal truth rather than a literal recounting of events.

4. Mythic Truths and the Reader's Experience

The interplay of myth and truth in *Savitri* invites readers to move beyond literal interpretation:
Engagement with symbols: Readers are encouraged to interpret mythic figures as expressions of inner realities.

Transformative reading: The poem does not merely entertain; it challenges readers toward introspection and spiritual questioning.

Aurobindo's poetic vision asserts that myth and truth are inseparable in spiritual literature. Myth crafts the narrative; truth infuses it with existential depth.

5. Comparisons with Traditional Myth

Unlike traditional myth, which often preserves cultural memory or historical consciousness, Aurobindo's vision transforms myth into a framework for spiritual evolution. Traditional myth often ends with resolution; in *Savitri*, myth becomes a beginning—a point of departure for philosophical inquiry. Aurobindo's rendering is not an attempt at historicity but a creative re-enactment that aligns myth with metaphysical vision.

Conclusion

Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* exemplifies the fusion of myth and truth in spiritual poetry. By reworking an ancient myth, Aurobindo reveals deeper truths about consciousness, love, suffering, and the destiny of humanity. Myth in *Savitri* is not a relic of the past but a dynamic, living form that communicates the ineffable. The poem's enduring significance lies in its ability to transform mythic narrative into a universal symbol of spiritual aspiration. Thus, *Savitri* stands not only as a literary epic but also as a metaphysical revelation—a testament to the power of myth to disclose truth.

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Myths and Truths: A Theoretical Exploration

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Abstract

Myths have often been considered as mythical or unreasonable narrations that stand in opposition to accuracy, specifically modern scientific and rational frameworks. Though such an understanding oversimplifies the complex nature and function of myths in human societies. This research paper explores the theoretical foundations of myths and their connection with truth by engaging with philosophical, psychological, sociological, and structuralist viewpoints. The study argues that myths are not only delusions but symbolic narratives that communicate moral, cultural, psychological, and empirical truths. a conceptual and qualitative research methodology, the paper reports modern and classical theories of myth to clarify how myths function as systems of meaning instead of factual explanations. It further explores the role of myths in shaping ideological frameworks, sense of belonging, ethical values, and common thinking, along with traditional societies and contemporary contexts such as religion, politics, and mass media. The paper determines that myths and truths are not mutually exclusive but complementary ways of understanding reality. However, scientific truth explains visible phenomena, mythic truth addresses deeper human concerns related to meaning, purpose, values, and lived experience. Understanding myths as alternative expressions of truth enables a more holistic and inclusive understanding of knowledge and human mental ability.

Keywords: *Myth, Truth, Symbolism, Theory, Culture, Knowledge Systems, Society*

1. Introduction

Human civilization has always been guided by narratives that seek to clarify the mysteries of the condition of being real. Long before the evolution of scientific reasoning and observational methods, people depended on stories to make sense of the world within their surroundings. These stories explained natural phenomena, human suffering, moral order, life after death, and the relationship between human beings and the cosmos. Such narratives came to be known as myths, and they shaped the intellectual and cultural foundations of primitive societies.

Notwithstanding their historical significance, myths have often been misinterpreted in modern times. With the rise of rationalism and scientific thought, myths started to be viewed as primitive explanations that were overtaken by factual knowledge. Truth came to be defined almost entirely in scientific and empirical terms, leaving little space for symbolic or narrative forms of understanding. As a result, myths were rejected as false, irrational, or misleading.

This approach, however, fails to recognise the profound functions of myths. Myths were never meant to rival science or provide literal interpretations of reality. Instead, they serve as symbolic narratives that convey meaning, values, and collective experiences. Myths address questions that science alone cannot fully answer, such as the meaning of life, the nature of good and evil, and the purpose of suffering.

This research paper aims to explore the theoretical foundations that help us understand myths and their relationship with truth. By examining philosophical, psychological, structuralist, and sociological perspectives, the study challenges the rigid opposition between myth and truth and suggests a more refined understanding of both concepts.

2. Conceptual Framework: Myth and Truth

2.1 Meaning and Nature of Myth

The word “myth” arises from the Greek term mythos, which originally meant speech, story, or narrative. In academic study, myths are defined as traditional narratives that clarify the origins of the

universe, natural events, social institutions, and human existence. They often involve gods, supernatural forces, or heroic figures and are deeply rooted in cultural and religious traditions.

Myths are typically conveyed through oral traditions and maintained through rituals, festivals, art, and literature. They function as shared narratives that bind communities at the same time and come up with a sense of identity. Importantly, myths are not designed to be historical records or scientific accounts. Their worth lies in their symbolic meaning instead of correctness.

By conveying collective fears, hopes, and ideals, myths help societies explain reality. They offer ethical guidance, social norms, and clarification for suffering and doubt. Myths are cultural tools that shape human understanding and the manner of carrying oneself or managing affairs.

2.2 Abstraction and Dimensions of Truth

Truth is a tangled and multilayered concept that has been debated throughout the progression of philosophy. Conventionally, truth has been understood as correspondence with existence. According to this opinion, a statement is true if it exactly reflects objective facts. On the other hand, this definition depicts only one dimension of truth.

Various philosophical theories highlight coherence, consistency, and practical effectiveness as guidelines for truth. Besides, human life contains moral truths, inner truths, and empirical truths that cannot always be existentially verified. These truths are nevertheless real and meaningful.

Myths operate within this wider understanding of truth. They do not aim to provide authentic accuracy but to convey symbolic and experiential truths. By addressing meaning, values, and identity, myths reveal dimensions of truth that lie beyond scientific measurement.

3. Philosophical Viewpoints on Myths

Philosophy has long acknowledged the value of myths as instruments of understanding. In ancient philosophical traditions, myths were frequently used to convey abstract ideas in narrative form. Symbolic myths served as teaching tools that made complicated philosophical concepts user-friendly to a wider audience.

Through a philosophical perspective, myths are innovative representations of truth. They explore essential questions about reality, knowledge, ethics, and existence. By using symbolism and narrative, myths allow people to engage with ideas that are hard to put into words through logical reasoning by itself.

Current philosophy also acknowledges the limitations of rational thought. Although logic and reason are required for understanding the physical world, they cannot fully address questions of meaning, purpose, and moral obligation. Myths complement coherent inquiry by offering a symbolic understanding of these aspects of human life.

4. Psychological explanations of Myths

Psychological theories provide a deeper understanding of why myths persist and endure across cultures. According to analytical psychology, myths originate from the collective unconscious, a shared psychological talent reserve containing prototypes and universal symbols. These prototypes recur frequently in myths across various cultures, indicating recurring patterns of human experience.

Myths convey psychological realities-fear of death, desire for transcendence, struggle between opposites, and quest for self-realisation. Through mythic stories, individuals externalise conflicts and anxieties, making them easier to understand and manage.

From a psychological perspective, myths serve therapeutic functions. They offer models of transformation, resilience, and moral choice. By identifying with mythic heroes or divine figures, individuals find meaning and guidance in their own lives. Thus, myths communicate psychological truths that remain relevant across time and culture.

5. Structuralist Approach to Myths

The structuralist approach views myths as systems governed by underlying structures rather than isolated stories. This perspective focuses on patterns, relationships, and binary oppositions present within mythic narratives. Common oppositions include life and death, nature and culture, chaos and order, and good and evil.

Structuralists argue that myths help societies resolve contradictions by symbolically mediating opposing concepts. Rather than offering direct solutions, myths present narratives that make these contradictions meaningful and manageable. The truth of myths lies in their structure, which reflects how human cognition organises experience.

This approach challenges the assumption that myths are irrational. Instead, myths are shown to be sophisticated systems of symbolic reasoning that reveal fundamental cognitive patterns.

6. Sociological Significance of Myths

6.1 Myths and Social Order

From a sociological perspective, myths play a crucial role in maintaining social order. They legitimise social institutions, political authority, and moral norms. Religious myths establish sacred laws, while national myths justify collective identity and historical continuity.

By providing shared narratives, myths foster social cohesion and unity. They create a sense of belonging and reinforce group values. In this way, myths function as social glue that binds individuals into communities.

6.2 Myths and Power

Myths are also closely connected to power and ideology. Political myths shape national identity, justify authority, and influence public opinion. Leaders and institutions often use mythic narratives to legitimise their actions and mobilise support.

Understanding myths as social constructs allows for critical examination of how narratives shape perception and behaviour. This highlights the continuing relevance of myth in modern political and social life.

7. Myths in Contemporary Society

Despite advances in science and technology, myths continue to thrive in modern societies. They appear in popular culture, mass media, advertising, and digital narratives. Superheroes, national heroes, and celebrity figures often function as modern mythic symbols.

Contemporary myths address similar psychological and social needs as traditional ones. They provide meaning and identity in a complex world, showing myths are not obsolete but adaptive forms of expression.

8. Rethinking the Myth -Truth Separation

The rigid separation between myth and truth reflects a narrow understanding of knowledge. While myths may not conform to scientific standards of verification, they express truths related to human experience, values, and meaning. Mythic truth complements scientific truth by addressing dimensions of reality that lie beyond empirical observation.

Scientific truth explains processes and mechanisms, whereas mythic truth explains significance and purpose. Both forms of truth are necessary for a comprehensive understanding of reality.

9. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and theoretical research methodology. It is based on the critical analysis of secondary sources, including philosophical writings, psychological theories, and sociological studies related to myths and truth. The research is interpretative in nature and aims to synthesise existing theoretical perspectives into a coherent framework.

10. Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that myths remain vital to human understanding. They function as symbolic systems that communicate truths beyond empirical observation. Myths help individuals and societies interpret existence, confront uncertainty, and construct shared meanings.

The continued relevance of myths in modern contexts confirms that mythic thinking is fundamental to human cognition. Theoretical analysis allows for a deeper appreciation of myths as dynamic narratives that evolve with changing social conditions.

11. Conclusion

This research paper concludes that myths and truths are not mutually exclusive but complementary forms of knowledge. Theoretical perspectives from philosophy, psychology, sociology, and structuralism demonstrate that myths convey symbolic truths essential to understanding human experience. Expanding the concept of truth beyond factual accuracy allows myths to be recognised as valuable sources of cultural, psychological, and existential insight. A theoretical understanding of myths supports a holistic approach to knowledge that integrates rational inquiry with symbolic meaning.

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Women in Indian Myths: A Study of Matsyagandha, Gandhari, Kunti and Draupadi from Mahabharata

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Abstract

Indian mythological narratives portray women not merely as supporting figures but as influential agents who shape ethical, social, and political outcomes. This paper undertakes an original interpretative study of four women from the Mahabharata*—Matsyagandha (Satyavati), Gandhari, Kunti and Draupadi.—to examine the varied ways in which womanhood is constructed in epic literature. Instead of retelling myths, the study focuses on themes such as agency, sacrifice, resistance, and continuity. The paper argues that these characters demonstrate conscious decision-making and moral reasoning within restrictive patriarchal structures. Their experiences offer valuable insights into gender discourse and remain relevant to contemporary discussions on women's empowerment.*

Keywords: *Indian mythology, Mahabharata, women in epics, gender roles, patriarchy*

1. Introduction

Indian mythology has played a significant role in forming social attitudes toward gender and morality. Women in epic literature are often viewed through idealized roles such as devoted wives or self-sacrificing mothers. However, a closer and critical reading of these narratives reveals women who actively engage with power, ethics, and personal choice. The *Mahabharata*, in particular, presents female characters whose actions influence the course of events and moral debates within the epic.

This research paper examines Matsyagandha, Gandhari, Kunti and Draupadi, as representative figures of diverse feminine experiences. The objective of the study is to analyze how these women navigate patriarchal expectations while asserting individuality and moral authority. The paper adopts a thematic and analytical approach rather than a descriptive one.

1. Matsyagandha (Satyavati): Assertion of Power, Identity, and Female Agency

Matsyagandha, later known as Satyavati, is one of the most strategically significant women in the *Mahabharata*. Her narrative reflects the intersection of gender, caste, power, and ambition within a rigid patriarchal order. Unlike idealized portrayals of passive femininity, Satyavati's life demonstrates conscious self-fashioning and political foresight.

Marginality and Identity Formation

Born to a fisherman, Matsyagandha occupies a socially marginalized position due to her caste and occupation. Her identity is initially defined by her bodily association with labor and nature, symbolized by the smell of fish. This marginality, however, becomes the foundation for her transformation. The change of her name to Satyavati signifies not merely a physical or social elevation but the construction of a new identity shaped by power and legitimacy.

Negotiation of Power and Marriage

Satyavati's marriage to King Shantanu marks a decisive assertion of agency. Unlike traditional portrayals of women as passive recipients of marital alliances, she places explicit conditions on the marriage, ensuring that her sons will inherit the throne. This negotiation foregrounds her political intelligence and challenges patriarchal assumptions that women lack strategic vision. Her actions reveal an understanding of royal succession and dynastic politics.

Motherhood and Dynastic Control

As a mother, Satyavati's influence extends beyond domestic boundaries into state affairs. Her insistence on continuity of lineage leads to extraordinary decisions, including the practice of niyoga. While ethically complex, these decisions highlight the limited yet forceful ways in which women could exercise authority within patriarchal constraints. Satyavati emerges as the matriarch who ensures the survival of the Kuru dynasty.

Re-reading Ambition and Morality

Satyavati is often judged harshly for her ambition; however, such readings overlook the gendered limitations of her context. In a world where women's security and authority were contingent upon male heirs, ambition becomes a survival strategy rather than a moral flaw. Her character invites a re-evaluation of ambition in women and exposes the double standards applied to female authority.

Symbolic Significance

Matsyagandha's journey from the margins to the center of power symbolizes the possibility of female self-determination within restrictive social systems. She represents a form of feminine power that operates through negotiation, foresight, and resilience rather than open rebellion. Her story complicates simplistic binaries of virtue and vice, positioning her as one of the most complex female figures in Indian mythology.

2. Gandhari: Silence, Sacrifice, and Moral Authority

Gandhari is one of the most psychologically complex women in the *Mahabharata*. Traditionally idealized as the embodiment of wifely devotion, her character, when read critically, reveals deep inner strength, ethical clarity, and suppressed resistance. Gandhari's life reflects how women internalize suffering within patriarchal structures while retaining moral power.

The Blindfold as Choice and Protest

Gandhari's decision to blindfold herself after marrying the blind king Dhritarashtra is commonly interpreted as an act of extreme devotion. However, a deeper analysis suggests that this act also functions as a silent protest against an unjust marriage arranged without her consent. The blindfold symbolizes Gandhari's refusal to participate fully in a world that denied her agency. It becomes a personal response to patriarchal imposition rather than mere submission.

Silence and Inner Strength

Unlike Draupadi, Gandhari does not voice her anger publicly. Her silence, however, should not be mistaken for weakness. Gandhari's restraint represents emotional discipline and moral endurance. She observes events with clarity and repeatedly advises her sons to follow dharma, demonstrating that ethical wisdom does not require public assertion.

Motherhood and Moral Conflict

As the mother of a hundred sons, Gandhari faces an intense moral dilemma. Her love for her children conflicts with her awareness of their unjust actions. She repeatedly warns Duryodhana against arrogance and adharma, indicating her moral foresight. Gandhari's motherhood is thus portrayed as a site of ethical struggle rather than blind affection.

Curse as Expression of Suppressed Anger

Gandhari's curse upon Krishna after the Kurukshetra war is one of the most powerful moments in the epic. After years of restraint, her grief transforms into moral outrage. The curse does not arise from revenge alone but from an ethical condemnation of violence and divine indifference. This moment reveals Gandhari's latent authority and challenges the expectation that women must remain forgiving and silent.

Symbolic Significance

Gandhari represents a form of feminine power rooted in moral vision rather than political authority. Her character exposes the emotional cost of silence and the burden of ethical responsibility placed upon women. Through Gandhari, the *Mahabharata* acknowledges that suppressed suffering can carry profound moral weight.

3. Kunti: Motherhood, Responsibility, and Moral Dilemma

Kunti is one of the most morally complex and emotionally layered women in the *Mahabharata*. Her life is shaped by early autonomy, enforced secrecy, maternal responsibility, and lifelong ethical conflict. Unlike women whose strength is expressed through public resistance or political authority, Kunti's power operates through decision-making, endurance, and moral burden.

Early Autonomy and the Burden of Choice

Kunti's invocation of divine power before marriage marks an unusual moment of female autonomy in epic literature. This act reflects curiosity and agency, yet the consequences of this choice reveal the gendered double standards of society. While divine intervention produces Karna, social norms deny Kunti the freedom to acknowledge him openly. Her autonomy thus becomes the source of lifelong guilt, highlighting how women's choices are harshly judged within patriarchal systems.

Secrecy, Silence, and Social Survival

Kunti's decision to abandon Karna is often viewed as moral failure. However, a critical reading situates this act within social realities where female honor determined survival. Silence and secrecy become mechanisms of self-preservation rather than cowardice. Kunti's silence contrasts with Draupadi's vocal resistance, showing that women adopt different strategies to survive patriarchal control.

Motherhood as Ethical Responsibility

As the mother of the Pandavas, Kunti plays a central role in shaping their values. Her guidance during exile reflects political awareness, emotional strength, and commitment to dharma. She repeatedly emphasizes unity, restraint, and duty, demonstrating that motherhood in the epic is not merely nurturing but ethically formative.

The Karna Dilemma and Moral Complexity

The episode involving Kunti and Karna before the Kurukshetra war represents one of the most emotionally intense and ethically complex moments in the *Mahabharata*. Kunti approaches Karna not as a queen or political strategist but as a mother burdened by guilt and remorse.

4. Draupadi: Resistance, Voice, and the Question of Dharma

Draupadi is one of the most powerful and articulate female figures in Indian mythology. Unlike women whose strength operates through silence or indirect influence, Draupadi asserts herself through speech, questioning, and moral reasoning. Her character represents open resistance to injustice and exposes the ethical failures of patriarchal institutions.

Birth and Symbolic Identity

Draupadi's birth from sacrificial fire symbolically associates her with disruption and transformation. She is not born into domesticity but into a political and ethical battlefield. This origin sets her apart as a woman destined to challenge established norms rather than conform to them.

Polyandry and Patriarchal Control

Draupadi's marriage to the five Pandavas is often justified through destiny or divine will. However, a critical reading reveals how her consent is marginalised. Polyandry becomes less a symbol of empowerment and more an example of how female desire is subordinated to patriarchal and dynastic interests. Draupadi's dignity lies not in the arrangement itself but in how she negotiates self-respect within it.

The Dice Hall Episode: Ethical Crisis

The disrobing episode in the Kaurava court represents the epic's greatest moral collapse. Draupadi's questioning—whether a man who has lost himself can stake his wife—exposes the hollowness of patriarchal law. Her voice transforms personal humiliation into a public ethical trial, holding elders, kings, and scholars accountable.

Speech as Resistance

Draupadi's strength lies in her refusal to be silent. Her articulation of injustice challenges the belief that virtue lies in female endurance alone. By demanding answers, she destabilizes the moral authority of the court and redefines dharma as justice rather than tradition.

Symbolic Significance

Draupadi symbolizes feminine resistance and moral courage. She stands for women who refuse to normalize injustice and who assert dignity through voice and reasoning. Her presence in the epic ensures that silence is not mistaken for virtue and that injustice is publicly named.

Comparative Perspective

The four women examined in this study present contrasting yet complementary responses to patriarchal structures. Satyavati represents political assertion, Gandhari embodies moral restraint, Kunti reflects moral dilemma, and Draupadi exemplifies resistance. Together, they demonstrate that Indian mythology accommodates diverse forms of feminine power.

Contemporary Significance

The experiences of these mythological women remain relevant in modern gender discourse. Issues such as social mobility, ethical responsibility, protest against injustice, and emotional resilience continue to shape women's lives today. A critical engagement with these narratives allows readers to reinterpret mythology as a space of dialogue rather than rigid tradition.

Conclusion

This study establishes that women in Indian mythology are integral to the ethical and narrative structure of epic literature. Matsyagandha, Gandhari, Kunti and Draupadi, illustrate varied expressions of agency and moral strength. Reading these characters through a gender-sensitive and analytical lens reveals their lasting relevance and challenges simplistic portrayals of women in myth. Such interpretations encourage a deeper understanding of women's roles in both ancient narratives and contemporary society.

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Literary Manifestations of Myth in Ancient and Contemporary Literature: An LGBTQ+ Perspective

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Abstract

Myth has been foundational in shaping cultural understandings of gender, desire, and identity across civilizations. From ancient epics and religious narratives to contemporary literary works, mythic figures and structures have repeatedly served as conduits for exploring non-normative sexualities and gender expressions. Yet, traditional myths have often been interpreted through heteronormative lenses that marginalize queer experiences. This paper examines how myths are manifested in ancient and contemporary literature through an LGBTQ+ lens, revealing both historical queer presences and modern reimaginings that challenge normative frameworks. By analyzing key ancient texts—such as the Mahābhārata, Greek mythology, and Mesopotamian narratives—alongside contemporary works like Jeanette Winterson's Written on the Body and Naoise Dolan's Exciting Times, this study demonstrates how myths are not static relics but dynamic frameworks that continually evolve to articulate queer subjectivities. Drawing on queer theory, postcolonial criticism, and Indian queer scholarship, the paper argues that LGBTQ+ readings of myth recover suppressed narratives, decolonize interpretive traditions, and reconfigure mythic structures to resist normative identity prescriptions.

Keywords*Mythology; Queer Theory; LGBTQ+ Literature; Gender Fluidity; Ancient and Contemporary Literature; Indian Mythology; Decolonization; Sexuality Studies*

Objectives of the Study

* To examine the representation of gender and sexual fluidity in ancient mythological narratives from Greek and South Asian traditions.
* To analyse how contemporary literature reinterprets mythic structures to articulate LGBTQ+ identities.
* To apply queer and postcolonial theoretical frameworks in rereading canonical myths.
* To recover marginalized queer narratives erased through colonial and heteronormative interpretations.
* To establish myth as a dynamic and evolving literary form relevant to contemporary queer discourse.

Introduction

Myth has historically functioned as a cultural mechanism through which societies legitimize norms related to kinship, sexuality, and gender. In many civilizations, myths were not merely stories for entertainment but ideological instruments that encoded acceptable forms of desire and embodiment. Consequently, interpretations of myth have often been shaped by dominant power structures that privilege heteronormativity and binary gender systems. Such readings, however, risk flattening the complex symbolic language of myth, which frequently accommodates ambiguity, contradiction, and fluid identity formations.

From an LGBTQ+ perspective, myth becomes a critical site of inquiry because it reveals how non-normative sexualities and genders were conceptualized long before modern identity categories emerged. As Michel Foucault argues, "sexuality is not a timeless essence but a historically produced discourse shaped by power and knowledge" *(History of Sexuality 43)*. When myths are reread through queer theory, they expose suppressed histories of desire and embodiment that challenge modern assumptions about the "naturalness" of heterosexuality.

This paper positions myth as a dynamic narrative structure that evolves across time, allowing ancient queer possibilities to resonate within contemporary literature. By placing ancient and modern texts in dialogue, the study underscores how mythic motifs—such as transformation, duality, and liminality—

continue to inform queer literary expressions. Thus, myth functions not as a static inheritance but as a living archive of sexual and gender plurality.

Understanding Myth and Queerness

Traditional myth criticism has often prioritized universality and moral instruction, overlooking how myths encode transgressive or subversive desires. Structuralist and psychoanalytic approaches, while valuable, tend to normalize heterosexual frameworks by interpreting queer elements as symbolic aberrations rather than legitimate expressions of identity. Queer theory disrupts this tendency by foregrounding instability, contradiction, and non-linearity within mythic narratives.

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity is particularly relevant to mythic analysis. Many mythological figures repeatedly perform gender through costume, behaviour, or transformation, suggesting that gender is not innate but enacted *(Butler Gender Trouble 191).* Myths involving cross-dressing gods, dual-gendered deities, or same-sex desire challenge the fixity of gender long before modern queer discourse emerged. These narratives anticipate contemporary understandings of gender as fluid and relational.

Moreover, queer readings of myth emphasize affective bonds—love, loyalty, grief, and desire—that exceed reproductive or marital frameworks. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick notes "that queerness often resides in homosocial intimacy and emotional excess rather than explicit sexual acts *"(Epistemology of the Closet 2)*. Myths, with their intense emotional registers, provide fertile ground for interpreting such non-normative attachments.

Ancient Myths and Queer Possibilities

Greek Mythology: Fluidity, Transformation, and Desire

Greek mythology's frequent reliance on metamorphosis destabilizes fixed categories of body and identity. Ovid's Metamorphoses foregrounds bodily transformation as both punishment and desire, revealing a worldview in which identity is mutable. From a queer perspective, transformation operates as a metaphor for transgression against normative embodiment, allowing characters to exist beyond binary classifications of sex and gender.

Same-sex desire in Greek myth is often framed within divine hierarchies, where gods freely pursue lovers regardless of gender. Zeus, Apollo, and Dionysus engage in relationships that blur moral and sexual boundaries, suggesting a mythic imagination unconstrained by later moral codifications. These narratives complicate modern assumptions that homosexuality is a contemporary phenomenon, instead revealing its deep mythological roots.

Importantly, Greek myths do not always punish queer desire; instead, they often immortalize it through natural symbols—flowers, stars, constellations. The myth of Apollo and Hyacinthus transforms queer love into eternal remembrance, aestheticizing desire rather than condemning it. Thus, Greek mythology presents queerness not as deviation but as an integral part of cosmic order.

South Asian Myths: Gender Variance and Desire

South Asian mythological traditions provide a rich archive of gender multiplicity and sexual diversity that predates colonial moral frameworks. Unlike Western myths that often resolve gender ambiguity through punishment or tragedy, Indian myths frequently integrate gender variance into cosmological balance. Figures like Ardhanarishvara symbolize not conflict but harmony between masculine and feminine principles.

Shikhandi's role in the Mahābhārata is especially significant from a queer standpoint. Born female and later living as male, Shikhandi's gender identity is socially recognized, allowing participation in warfare and political destiny. This narrative challenges modern assumptions that ancient societies rigidly enforced binary gender roles. Ruth Vanita argues that "such figures reveal a cultural tolerance for gender plurality in pre-colonial India" *(Vanita 88).*

The concept of tritiya prakriti in texts like the Kama Sutra further acknowledges non-binary sexual identities without moral condemnation. Colonial reinterpretations erased these categories, reframing them as immoral

or unnatural. Queer readings of South Asian myths thus serve a dual purpose: recovering indigenous queer histories and resisting colonial epistemologies that imposed restrictive sexual norms.

Contemporary Literature and Mythic Reimagining's

Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body*

Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body* can be read as a modern myth of desire that transcends bodily specificity. By refusing to gender the narrator, Winterson dismantles the reader's reliance on heteronormative assumptions. This narrative strategy echoes mythic anonymity, where archetypal figures stand in for universal human experience.

The novel's lyrical language and anatomical metaphors elevate love to a mythic plane, transforming the body into sacred terrain. This resonates with ancient myths where bodies are sites of divine inscription and transformation. Winterson thus reclaims mythic language to articulate queer desire without recourse to fixed identity labels.

Moreover, *Written on the Body* resists narrative closure, mirroring the open-endedness of myth. Desire remains unresolved, refusing containment. This structural queerness aligns with LGBTQ+ experiences that often resist linear narratives of love, marriage, and reproduction.

Naoise Dolan's *Exciting Times*

Naoise Dolan's Exciting Times represents a contemporary evolution of mythic structures embedded within realist fiction. While the novel lacks overt mythological references, its thematic reliance on exile, self-discovery, and relational negotiation parallels classical hero journeys. Ava's movement across geographical and emotional landscapes mirrors mythic quests for identity.

Queerness in Exciting Times is portrayed not as exceptional but as normalized, reflecting shifts in contemporary narrative ethics. This normalization itself becomes radical when viewed against historical literary marginalization of queer characters. Dolan thus contributes to modern myth-making by redefining what constitutes a "heroic" narrative.

The novel's fragmented structure reflects queer temporality, resisting linear progression toward resolution. This aligns with queer theoretical critiques of heteronormative life scripts, emphasizing instead ongoing becoming and self-revision.

Queer Readings of Epic and Mythic Structures

Epic narratives traditionally valorize lineage, inheritance, and heroic masculinity. Queer readings disrupt these values by highlighting affective bonds and alternative kinship systems. In doing so, they reveal how epics encode tensions between social duty and personal desire.

Transformation, disguise, and divine intervention operate as narrative tools that permit characters to transgress norms temporarily. Queer criticism insists that these moments are not incidental but central to mythic meaning. They expose the instability underlying supposedly fixed social categories.

By foregrounding these disruptions, queer readings reposition myth as a critique of normativity rather than its reinforcement. Epics thus become spaces of ideological struggle where dominant values are both asserted and undermined.

Decolonizing Myth: Indian Contexts

Colonial reinterpretations of Indian myths imposed Victorian sexual morality, reframing fluid narratives as deviant or immoral. This process distorted indigenous traditions and erased queer-friendly epistemologies. Gayatri Gopinath emphasizes that 'decolonizing sexuality requires revisiting cultural texts to uncover suppressed histories' (*Impossible Desires 15*).

Contemporary queer scholarship reclaims myth as a site of resistance by emphasizing pre-colonial pluralism. Devdutt Pattanaik's reinterpretations of Hindu mythology foreground gender fluidity and same-sex desire, challenging orthodox readings that deny queer presence.

Such reclamation is politically significant in contemporary India, where debates around sexuality remain contentious. Myth, reread through an LGBTQ+ lens, becomes a cultural resource for challenging exclusionary nationalism and affirming inclusive identities.

Conclusion

Queer interpretations of myth fundamentally alter how literature is understood across time. They demonstrate that non-normative desire and gender variance are not modern inventions but enduring aspects of human storytelling. Myth thus emerges as a trans historical space where queerness persists despite cultural suppression.

By engaging both ancient and contemporary texts, this study underscores the continuity of queer imagination across literary history. Contemporary writers do not merely reference myth; they extend its transformative potential, ensuring its relevance in articulating marginalized identities.

Ultimately, LGBTQ+ readings of myth reaffirm literature's capacity to imagine alternative worlds. In reclaiming myth as a queer space, scholars and writers challenge hegemonic narratives and open pathways toward more inclusive cultural futures.

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Roland Barthes Theory of Myth into Practice: Understanding the Myth of Mahabali and Vaman

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Abstract

Roland Barthes has presented a different approach of reading and understanding Myth in his book 'Mythologies' (1954). He considers, Myth as a system of Communication. The present research paper studies the selected myth of Demon King Mahabali and Lord Vishnu's fifth incarnation Vaman and critically applies the theory of Myth to investigate how meaning is produced at different levels. The research is a systematic study based on the ideas which are part of the theory of Myth including- first-order meaning which is transformed into second- order meanings. Most importantly paper aims to explore how the myth depoliticizes reality and naturalizes history.

Keywords: *Myth, sign, signifier, signified, first order meaning, second order meaning, depoliticize.*

Mythology is a popular form of literature. It is integral part of literature of every culture. In India various mythological narratives are available which are having diverse themes. Myth are the narratives frequently about Gods, miracles, mysteries or fables. In India large number of myths are widely popular. These stories are like models for society, guiding, providing moral, ethical lessons. These myths influence individuals as well as society.

Various critics have studied Myths from different point of views.

French critic Roland Barthes discusses the concept of Myth in his book Mythologies (1954) in a novel way. The book consists several essays which were written monthly on the topics suggested by current events. In these essays Barthes tries to reflect regularly on some myths of French daily life.

Barthes says, "myth is a system of communication, that it is a message." (Barthes, 107) Further he elaborates and makes it more clear in his essay 'Myth Today' that when he says 'myth' what he is talking about.

"myth is a type of speech, everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse."(107)

He is not talking about the term 'Myth' in general sense i.e. fiction or the narratives frequently about Gods, miracles, mysteries or fables. Ferdinand de Saussure has used the terms signifier, sign, and signified. While presenting the concept of myth as a way of communication, Roland Barthes uses the terms signifier and signified and he elaborates his ideas. For him, myth is a second order semiological system.

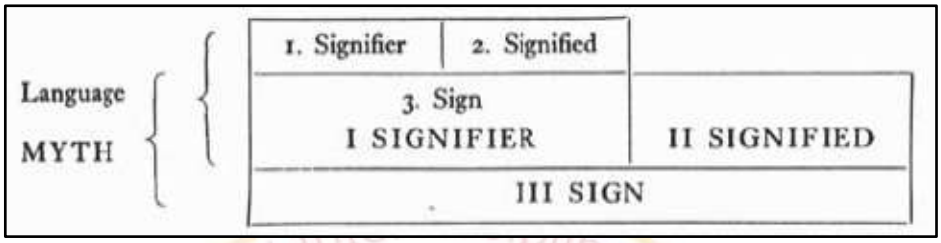
"In myth, we find again the tri-dimensional pattern ...Myth is a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a *second-order semiological system*. That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second". (Barthes,117)

In the first level, the myth presents a story connoting with sign. This is the first order of signification where literal level of language is at focus. But at next level, the second level of signification, the first level sign becomes signifier and share ideological meaning which has deeper significance. At this level ideology is presented as a nature. In other words, Barthes prove that the myth abolishes complexities of human acts. It gives them simplicity and freshness. The myth transforms history into nature. Myth depoliticizes reality. But this does not mean that myth deny things. Barthes says, "On the contrary, its function is to talk about them." For him, myth is not a false story, but he mentions it as a system of communication. He has redefined the concept of myth. He does not think that it is a traditional story, but he has a different perspective of looking

at myth as a mode of signification, using which an ideology can be conveyed and naturalized. He presents myth functioning as setting unquestionable truths by transforming historical and cultural constructions.

"Myth is a system of communication. That is a message."

It is interesting to know what and how the message is conveyed through the myth. He thinks, it functions like the way a language functions. Moreover, he thinks myth conveys meaning, values and ideology. He advocates anything can be a myth. Including an image, a character, a thing. It can communicate a cultural message. He gives the examples of wine, rose, an image of a black French soldier etc. to explain his idea and explains how it functions as a cultural message. He says, myth works at two different levels of meaning. The first level is about denotative order of meaning. Barthes contributes here significantly by adding a new second level of connotative meaning. A second system of meaning on the basis of first. His framework shows how to uncover the hidden ideologies which are embedded in the historical or cultural narratives.



(Figure of Barthes' concept second level signification pg. no. 113)

Here the researcher selects a mythological story from Bhagavat Puran which is about demon king named Mahabali and the Lord Vishnu's Vaman avatar. As per story, the demon king Mahabali conquered heaven who was willing to take revenge on Indra for his previous defeat. In the earlier war Mahabali was killed by Indra who was later revived by Mahabali's 'guru' Shukracharya .After the defeat of Indra and all other Gods, Aditi, mother of Gods worshipped Vishnu to help Indra to get back Heaven and balance the universe. Vishnu took the form of Vaman and visited Mahabali who was performing 'Ashwmedha Yagna'. He asked Mahabali three paces of land who was ready to fulfil the wish of Vaman. As soon as Mahabali accepted his wish Vaman transformed into massive size. In the first step he conquered earth, in the second step heaven and asked Mahabali where to keep his third step. Calm and firm Mahabali told him, to keep the third step on his head. Thus Vaman placed his foot on Mahabali's head and restored Indra's rule to heaven. Even though Vishnu tricked and defeated Mahabali, he was pleased with his dedication towards fulfilment of wish, so he rewarded Mahabali with the eternal life(Cheeranjivi) boon and Kingship of 'Patal Lok'.By defeating Mahabali Vishnu ultimately resetteled the power of Indra on heaven.

Application of Barthes concept to the Story

For Barthes myth is not a false tale but he thinks it transforms first order meaning into second order meaning. He refers it as signification. But while doing so he reminds that this second order meaning does not eliminate first order meaning. Thus providing a framework to read cultural narratives and helps to demystify the myth, reinvent the social, natural and depoliticizing principal.

I) At the level of narrative, the story presents Mahabali, a demon king as firm and follower of Dharma who accepted the Vaman's wish, even though he was reminded by his teacher Shukracharya about the possibility of arrival of disguised Vishnu in the form of Vaman to deceive and defeat Mahabali. He accepted and fulfilled Vaman's wish at the cost of his empire and his own life. As a result of it, Vishnu rewarded him. Vishnu went to trick Mahabali in order to defeat and restore the division of Trailokya among Gods and Demons.

II) Barthes's in his framework provides the next step which he mentions as the first order of Signification, which operates at the language level.

1. Here the signifiers are Mahabali's acceptance, fulfilment of Vaman's wish as a host of Yagna and Vishnu's arrival in the form of 'Yachak-Vaman' to fulfill the task of defeating Mahabali to restore the heaven to Indra.
2. The tale exhibits the signified action, Mahabali following 'Dharma' (duty), respect for Yachaka (guest) and importance of keeping word. It also presents Vishnu as a clever Lord who could accomplish the goals skilfully.
3. The signifier and signified thus express sign (literal message).

A true host ('data'-(doner)) should fulfil the desire of guest (yachak (beneficiary)) without considering his personal loss. Preference should be given to the fulfilling the desire of guest. Lord Vishnu serves poetic justice. HE balances universe and serves justice. Mahabali's wrong deeds (Conquering heaven) lead to his defeat but his virtues lead to reward. In this way at this level the myth appears as culturally directive.

III) At this newly introduced level Barthes proposes the idea of second order signification.
In his words,

"myth is a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a second – order semiological system. That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second." (Barthes, 113)

While discussing this concept Graham Allen has used a term duplicity or doubleness of signs.

He thinks, myth hijacks meaning and turns it into a second order meaning. This second order meaning is mentioned by Barthes as *signification.* This signification is a process of producing meaning through the transformation of already existing meaning. So Barthes calls, "myth as a *metalanguage* –second order language". (Barthes, 114) Barthes deconstructs myths in a way to expose hidden ideologies. He unmasks the politics in front of us.

In the selected story, the first sign becomes new signifier. Mahabali's sacrifice represents something larger than the story. What is signified at this level is not merely individual vice and virtue, but the legitimation of distribution of 'Trailokya' heaven, earth and netherlands. As the story refers Demon king Mahabali who was ruling on earth particularly in Kerala later conquered Heaven to take revenge of Indra. The distribution of Netherlands, Earth and heaven among Gods, humans,animals and demons represents balance of universe. This division which looks like monopoly of a group is represented as inevitability. The power politics comes in front of readers. Here the traditional division of power and rule is maintained by Vishnu. The triumph of dharma (righteousness) over the arrogance and revenge which later lead to the eternity reward and Kingship of Patal Lok to Mahabali re-establishes the principal of punishment for negativity and reward for positivity. It does not remain a myth about a demon at the second level of signification.The myth naturalizes the ideology, that the heaven belongs to Gods. Mahabali's sacrifice and downfall is not questioned and not considered as injustice but as a noble act of sacrifice, humbleness and firmness. By glorifying Mahabali's sacrifice rather than questioning Vamana's demand, the myth converts tricky demand into balancing and justifying principle. It also presents Lord Vishnu as true balancer of universe**.** Thus, the ideological message conveyed is that division of heaven to Gods is natural and should not be challenged or changed.

Even though the myth of Mahabali and Vaman may stand for humbleness, sacrifice, deft, astuteness and reward, from Barthesian perspective it depoliticizes history. Power relations to heaven are associated with maintaining balance. The myth does not lie, it simplifies and depoliticizes reality.

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Beyond Borders of Belief: A Comparative Study of Myths Across Nations and Their Cultural Truths

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Abstract

Myths operate as powerful cultural narratives, often dismissed as fiction, that carry deep symbolic truths reflecting historical realities, psychological patterns, and cultural ideologies. This research paper employs a comparative approach, drawing examples from Indian, Greek, Norse, and African mythological traditions, to explore how diverse societies construct meaning and identity through common mythic themes like creation, heroism, and divine justice. The study reveals that myths are dynamic systems of meaning, functioning as cultural codes that preserve memory and values while adapting to changing contexts. Ultimately, the paper establishes that myths are not opposed to truth but are alternative, living modes of understanding reality that transcend national boundaries.

Keywords: *Mythology, Comparative Literature, Culture, Symbolism, Collective.*

Introduction

Myths hold a pivotal role in the cultural and literary chronicles of human society. From ancient oral traditions to modern literary reinterpretations, myths have functioned as essential narratives through which communities articulate the beginnings of the universe, human life, ethical values, and societal structures.

Myths are more than mere stories; they are symbolic representations of human experiences that encapsulate truths about society, psychology, history, and belief systems. Myths transformed into cultural frameworks that influenced rituals, laws, and ethical standards. Each nation developed its unique mythological tradition, shaped by geography, climate, social organisation, and historical context. Comparative mythology allows scholars to examine these narratives across different cultures to identify common patterns and unique characteristics. Myths across different cultures, despite their unique characteristics, often fulfill similar roles, addressing universal human issues such as birth, death, fear, desire, and transcendence.

Research Gap : This study addresses this gap by focusing on the following areas:

1) Creation Myths: Comparing cyclical (Indian) versus linear (Greek) and violent (Norse) perspectives.
2) Hero Myths: Examining diverse ideals of heroism (moral duty like Rama vs. physical strength like Hercules).
3) Gender Representation: Contrasting powerful goddesses (Indian/African) with emotionally complex ones (Greek)

The purpose of this study is to move beyond the misconception of myths as illogical stories and systematically explore their profound cultural truths. It aims to demonstrate how different cultures articulate universal human concerns and values through distinct narrative traditions, shaped by their unique historical and environmental contexts.

Research questions

1) How do myths function as symbolic cultural narratives that communicate social values, moral codes, and collective truths across different nations?
2) What similarities and differences emerge in Indian, Greek, Norse, and African myths through a comparative framework?
3) How are key mythological themes such as creation, heroism, gender roles represented ?
4) How do they continue to influence modern identity formation and cultural expression?

Review of literature

Scholars across disciplines have attempted to decode myths not merely as fictional narratives but as carriers of symbolic and cultural truths.

Sir James George Frazer, in The Golden Bough (1890), interpreted myths as ritualistic narratives that emerged from humanity's attempt to control nature and understand cosmic forces.His work laid the foundation for comparative mythology by identifying recurring patterns across cultures.

Building on Jung's ideas, Joseph Campbell, in The Hero with a Thousand Faces (1949), proposed the theory of the monomyth, suggesting that heroic narratives across nations follow a universal structure. Campbell's comparative approach supports the present study's argument that myths transcend national boundaries while adapting to local contexts.

Mircea Eliade's in Myth and Reality (1963), Eliade asserted that myths narrate sacred history and provide existential meaning. He emphasized that myths allow societies to reconnect with primordial time, thereby preserving cultural continuity.

Overall existing scholarship establishes that myths encode psychological, social, and cultural truths. This research addresses a gap in comparative studies by analyzing myths from Indian, Greek, Norse, and African traditions to highlight shared human concerns and culture-specific truths.

Objectives of study

1) To analyze myths as symbolic cultural narratives that convey collective beliefs, moral values, and social truths across different nations.
2) To undertake a comparative study of mythological traditions from Indian, Greek, Norse, and African cultures to identify common themes and cultural variations.
3) To explore the themes such as creation, heroism, gender roles across cultures.
4) To examine the role of myths in shaping cultural identity.5)To assess the continuing relevance of myths in contemporary literature and culture.

Research Methodology

The research follows a descriptive and analytical research design, combining textual analysis with comparative interpretation. Myths from Indian, Greek, Norse, and African traditions are selected for systematic examination in order to identify both universal patterns and culturally specific features .

The study Is based entirely on secondary sources. Primary texts include classical mythological and epic narratives such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Vedas, Odyssey, Iliad, Poetic Edda, and documented African oral myths. Secondary materials consist of scholarly books, research articles, journals, and critical essays related to mythology, comparative literature, anthropology, psychology, and cultural studies. Contemporary literary and cultural reinterpretations of myths are also consulted to assess their modern relevance. For analysis, the study adopts a thematic and comparative method. Selected myths are examined under key thematic categories such as creation, heroism, divine justice, gender roles, and the human–nature relationship. These themes are then compared across cultures to identify similarities, differences, and underlying cultural meanings.

Theoretical Framework

To understand myths across nations and their cultural truths, this study draws on multiple perspectives:

Comparative Mythology (Joseph Campbell): Focuses on identifying shared themes and archetypes (e.g., the hero's journey, creation myths) across diverse cultures to reveal universal human experiences. Helpful for highlighting global commonalities but limited in addressing unique cultural specificities and historical contexts.

Cultural Relativism (Franz Boas): Emphasizes that each culture's myths must be understood within their specific socio-historical context, arguing against universal interpretations. Relevant when analyzing how local values shape narrative truths, but less applicable when looking for cross-cultural connections.

Structuralism/Semiotics (Claude Lévi-Strauss & Roland Barthes): Examines myths as systems of signs and underlying structures that encode cultural values, tensions, and ideologies. Useful for deconstructing complex narratives from different regions (e.g., Norse, Aztec, Greek mythology).

National Identity Theory (Benedict Anderson): Views myths as narratives that help forge "imagined communities" and national consciousness. Central to analyzing how foundational myths underpin modern national identities and political narratives.

This blended framework enables an analysis that recognizes both universal mythic patterns and their local, politically charged rearticulations.

Analysis

1)The Function of Myths as Symbolic Cultural Narratives

Myths are powerful, symbolic narratives that function as a framework for societies to transmit core values, moral codes, and collective truths. They serve as a "moral compass" and "societal blueprint" by:
Explaining the World: Myths provide explanations for natural phenomena and the origins of the universe and humanity, offering comfort and understanding in the face of the unknown.

Instilling Moral and Ethical Values: Stories like the Greek myth of Icarus (cautioning against hubris) or Hindu epics like the Ramayana (emphasizing duty or dharma) provide clear ethical roadmaps and lessons for behaviour .

Challenging Norms: Myths are dynamic; they are reinterpreted over time to challenge existing norms, such as modern retellings of the Medusa myth that critique patriarchal oppression.

2) Similarities and Differences in Indian, Greek, Norse, and African Myths

A comparative framework reveals both universal themes and significant cultural specificities:

1) Cosmology- In Indian (Hindu) Cyclical creation/destruction;universe arises from single matter (e.g., Golden Egg). In Greek Universe begins with Chaos (void), then Earth (Gaia) and Sky (Uranus) emerge. In Norse Universe arises from Ginnungagap (void) between ice and fire; world made from giant Ymir's body. In Africa often emphasize harmony with nature and emergence from subterranean worlds (e.g., Navajo, though this is Native American, the focus on nature is common in indigenous African tales).
2) Nature of gods- In India Gods manifest cosmic principles and complex spiritual qualities; often deeply moral. In Greek Gods are immortal but often capricious, flawed, and interact frequently with humans. In Norse Gods are powerful but mortal, fated to die in the apocalyptic battle of Ragnarok. In Africa Often involve spiritual forces, ancestor reverence, and supreme beings who create order and then withdraw, working through lesser deities or spirits.
3) Key emphasis – In India Dharma (duty/righteousness) and spiritual fulfilment. In Greek Individualism, fate, and the balance between human ambition (hubris) and divine will. In Norse Courage, loyalty, resilience, and an acceptance of inevitable fate (fatalism). In Africa Resourcefulness, community cohesion, respect for the environment, and the importance of oral tradition.

3) Representation of Key Themes (Creation, Heroism, Gender Roles)

Creation: While all cultures have creation stories, the method varies from the sacrificial dismemberment of a primordial being (Norse Ymir, Hindu Purusha) to the separation of world parents (Maori, Egyptian) or emergence from a void (Greek). These narratives reflect the cultural understanding of the relationship between humans and the cosmos.

Heroism: The hero's journey is a universal archetype. Greek heroes like Hercules embody strength and perseverance. Indian heroes like Rama exemplify adherence to righteousness and sacrifice. African trickster tales of characters like Anansi the spider celebrate cunning and ingenuity as forms of resourcefulness.

Gender Roles: Traditionally, many mythologies have been male-dominated, establishing patriarchal norms. However, powerful female figures exist, such as the Greek warrior goddess Athena, the Hindu warrior goddess Durga, and the Norse goddess Freyja, who defy simple stereotypes of women as only

nurturing figures. Hindu mythology also traditionally recognized a third gender, offering a more complex view than purely binary systems.

4) Influence on Modern Identity and Cultural Expression

Myths continue to be living narratives that shape modern identity and expression.

Popular Culture: The hero's journey is the blueprint for countless modern stories, from Star Wars to superhero comics, perpetuating ancient ideals of justice and sacrifice.

National Identity: Foundation myths and national narratives (e.g., the American Dream, the founding of Rome) help form national consciousness and political ideologies.

Reinterpretation: Modern authors and artists actively reinterpret myths to explore contemporary social issues, such as gender roles, social justice, and environmental stewardship, ensuring their continued relevance.

Finding and results

Universal Themes: Across Indian, Greek, Norse, and African myths, core themes like creation, heroism, and the function of gods appear universally.

Cultural Specificities: Variations exist in cosmology (cyclical vs. linear), the nature of gods (moral vs. capricious vs. mortal), and key cultural emphases (dharma, fate, community).

Modern Relevance: Myths remain living narratives, shaping modern popular culture, national identity, and art through continuous reinterpretation.

Conclusion

Myths continue to be vital for understanding literature and culture world wide. This comparative analysis shows that myths are not obsolete tales but vibrant narratives that and uncover cultural truths and shared human experiences. By examining myths across different societies, the research reveals common thought patterns that connects humanity while honoring cultural differences .The study confirms that myths serves as potent instruments for creating meaning, shaping identity and ensuring cultural continuity. Ultimately ,myths act as links between the past and present ,imagination and reality ,National identity and universal humanity.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this research paper is an original work carried out by me under academic guidance and has not been published or submitted elsewhere for publication.

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Tradition and Transformation: Myth as Dramatic Strategy in Girish Karnad's Hayavadana

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Abstract

This study analyzes Girish Karnad's Hayavadana, a pivotal work that demonstrates the reimagining of myth within modern Indian theatre, engaging with contemporary issues of identity, individuality, and psychological conflict. Karnad's adaptation of the Kathasaritsagara, alongside influences from Indian folk theatre traditions such as Yakshagana and the Bhagavata, serves to reconstruct a traditional myth, thereby exploring modern existential quandaries. The play challenges the dichotomy between the physical and the intellectual, critically examining established beliefs regarding completeness, perfection, and human contentment. Through the fusion of mythic narrative frameworks and modern dramatic methodologies, Hayavadana surpasses temporal and cultural constraints, presenting myth not as a fixed artefact of history but as a flexible instrument for expressing contemporary realities. This analysis examines the thematic, structural, and performative aspects of Hayavadana, emphasising Karnad's innovative approach to drama and his employment of alienation, irony, and symbolism. The central argument posits that Karnad effectively reconciles tradition and modernity, utilising myth as a potent interpretive tool for dramatizing the anxieties and contradictions inherent in modern Indian society. Consequently, the paper establishes Hayavadana as a seminal work within Indian English drama, illustrating the capacity of myth to be continuously reinterpreted to mirror the complexities of human experience.

Keywords: *Myth, Modern Indian Theatre, Girish Karnad, Hayavadana, Identity*

Introduction

Modern Indian theatre has frequently drawn upon mythological stories as a potent artistic tool for expressing the social, cultural, and psychological dimensions of contemporary existence. Particularly in the post-independence era, playwrights have reimagined myth not as a mere collection of sacred traditions but as a dynamic cultural instrument capable of examining modern concerns, including identity, alienation, gender dynamics, and the fragmentation of the self. This artistic interaction with Hayavadana (1971), a play by Karnad, draws from the Kathasaritsagara and is further informed by folk performance traditions such as Yakshagana, thereby illustrating this fusion of myth, structure, and contemporary thought. Instead of a straightforward retelling of an ancient narrative, Karnad's work reconstructs myth to investigate existential anxieties related to identity, the sense of incompleteness, and the conflict between intellect and physicality. The recurring theme of head and body exchanges functions as a metaphor for the fragmented modern self, mirroring current challenges in achieving coherence and authenticity. This analysis explores how Hayavadana reinterprets myth to engage with modern existential and psychological issues, positioning the play within the wider context of modern Indian theatre and emphasising myth as a flexible and persistent dramatic approach.

Myth and Modernity in Indian Theatre

Mythology has historically constituted a fundamental element of Indian cultural identity, acting as a repository for shared values, beliefs, and ethical systems. Within the context of contemporary Indian theatre, myth does not operate as a mechanism of preservation; rather, it serves as a dynamic narrative structure, readily adaptable for the purpose of critiquing current societal conditions. Playwrights including Girish

Karnad, Mohan Rakesh, and Badal Sircar have employed mythological frameworks to investigate themes of alienation, identity struggles, and socio-political conflicts. Karnad's treatment of myth is unique because he views it as a dynamic, evolving tradition, rather than a static, unchangeable scripture. Through a contemporary lens, his reinterpretation of myth enables ancient narratives to resonate with contemporary issues. In Hayavadana, for instance, myth serves as a vehicle for exploring the fragmented character of modern identity, demonstrating how traditional stories can be adapted to confront psychological and philosophical challenges.

Myth and Modernity in Indian Theatre

In Indian cultural awareness, myth has always played a significant role as a storehouse of philosophical ideas, ethical principles, and communal memory. Mythological stories, which have their roots in written and oral traditions, have influenced societal conventions and personal identities throughout history. However, myth is no longer used as a static or reverential form in contemporary Indian theatre; rather, it appears as a flexible and dynamic narrative framework that may interact critically with present reality. In a culture that is changing quickly, contemporary playwrights use myth to explore themes like moral ambiguity, identity disintegration, alienation, and sociopolitical struggle. The role of myth in contemporary Indian drama has been redefined in large part by playwrights such as Girish Karnad, Mohan Rakesh, and Badal Sircar. Their works recontextualise myth to reveal contradictions between tradition and modernity, continuity and change, and individual desire and social expectation, rather than restating established moral certainties. Karnad's treatment of myth is particularly remarkable. He views myth as a dynamic and flexible cultural resource rather than a fixed, inviolable text. Karnad permits ancient tales to interact with contemporary existential and psychological concerns via the prism of a modern intellectual and theatrical viewpoint. Myth is a powerful tool in Hayavadana for exploring the shattered nature of contemporary identity. The play highlights the continuing importance of myth in the context of contemporary Indian theatre by demonstrating how traditional myths may be creatively altered to address philosophical questions like selfhood, completeness, and human desire.

Sources and Mythic Framework of *Hayavadana*

The main source of Hayavadana is a famous story found in the Kathasaritsagara, an old Sanskrit collection of myths that is usually credited to Somadeva. The original story is around a woman and two close friends, emphasising issues of friendship, loyalty, and the connection between intellectual essence and physical appearance. Girish Karnad drastically alters the content to address contemporary philosophical and existential issues, even though the original story conveys these ideas in a rather simple moral framework. His adaptation is a purposeful reconstruction rather than a mere transfer of myth, enabling the story to explore questions of human wholeness, identity, and desire. The subplot with Hayavadana, the man with a horse's head, is a significant novelty in Karnad's retelling of the narrative. Despite being lacking from the original source, this character serves as a potent symbolic extension of the play's main themes. The concept of incompleteness as a basic aspect of human existence is reinforced by Hayavadana's search for wholeness, which is comparable to the protagonists' identity problem. Through the employment of masks, music, stylised performance, and indigenous folk theatrical norms like the Bhagavata as a self-reflexive narrator, Karnad further enhances the legendary framework. By upending theatrical reality, these techniques provide a transitional area where myth and modernity meet. As a result, the mythological framework serves as a structural and thematic basis that encourages audience critical participation in addition to serving as a source of story.

Identity, Body–Mind Conflict, and the Myth of Wholeness

Through the ongoing philosophical struggle between body and intellect, the issue of identity is one of Hayavadana's most fascinating themes. Karnad uses the opposing characters of Devadatta and Kapila to dramatise this conflict. While Kapila depicts physical power, innate vigour, and corporeal presence,

Devadatta stands for intellectual brilliance, linguistic elegance, and cerebral dominance. The idea of a single, cohesive self is undermined by Padmini's attraction to both men, revealing identity as malleable, fractured, and internally divided. In contrast to solid identities, Karnad's characters "embody competing ideals of selfhood," as Dharwadker notes. One of the main legendary devices that highlights the erratic nature of identity is the head-to-head confrontation between Devadatta and Kapila. A basic philosophical question is posed by the episode: does the body or the intellect contain the essence of an individual? In order to critique contemporary society's fixation with harmony, purity, and completeness, Karnad purposefully left this subject open-ended.

The ultimate breakdown of the idealised unity between Kapila's body and Devadatta's mind highlights how impossible it is to achieve complete totality. This failure is indicative of a contemporary existential state in which attempts at synthesis fail to resolve the self's ongoing division (Karnad). The character of Hayavadana himself, whose hybrid shape human body with a horse's head symbolizes existential incompleteness in its most concrete form, runs parallel to this main story. The longing for a complete and ideal self is universal, as seen by the way his drive to become completely human reflects the psychological difficulties of the key characters. Ironically, the only way Hayavadana achieves "completeness" is by being wholly animal; this paradox serves to further support Karnad's doubts about fulfilment itself. As Kakar points out, the play's conclusion implies that incompleteness is a characteristic of the human situation rather than a defect to be fixed (Kakar).

Myth, Folk Theatre, and Social–Psychological Inquiry

Hayavadana may serve as both a social critique and a philosophical investigation because to Karnad's inventive dramaturgy, which combines traditional theatrical practices with legendary substance. A self-reflexive dramatic method that eschews illusionism is produced by utilising indigenous performance customs, such as music, stylised masks, the Bhagavata as a self-conscious narrator, and episodic structure. By preventing passive emotional involvement and promoting critical detachment, these strategies match the play with Brechtian alienation ideas while maintaining its Indian theatrical traditions (Mee).

At the same time, Hayavadana uses its legendary structure to address urgent social and psychological issues. In particular, Padmini's persona challenges traditional mythological depictions of women. The patriarchal ideals of female devotion, purity, and selflessness are challenged by her need for both intellectual and sensual fulfilment. Her sad destiny, however, highlights the harsh limitations placed on women's autonomy under a patriarchal moral system. According to Dharwadker, Karnad exposes how societal structures penalise women who defy expected roles via myth (Dharwadker). In a larger sense, the play captures the worries of modernity, such as alienation, identity fragmentation, and the lack of consistent meaning in a society that is changing quickly. Karnad illustrates how old stories may be reactivated to challenge contemporary psychological and societal realities by universalising the sense of conflict and desire by enclosing these issues in a mythological framework. Therefore, in contemporary Indian theatre, myth serves as a potent tool for critical investigation rather than as a means of escape.

Conclusion

The play Hayavadana is considered a seminal piece in the history of modern Indian theatre because it exemplifies the everlasting significance of myth in the process of addressing contemporary issues. In Girish Karnad's reinterpretation of myth, ancient myths are transformed into vehicles for contemporary philosophical inquiry, going beyond the simple act of repeating old stories. The play depicts the complexity of contemporary living through its examination of elements such as identity, incompleteness, and the contrast between the body and the intellect. A one-of-a-kind theatrical language that spans the gap between tradition and innovation is created by Karnad through the combination of traditional folk theatre practices with contemporary dramatic tactics. This research demonstrates that Hayavadana is a prime example of how myth may be repeatedly reinterpreted to shed light on the ever-changing human reality. As a result, it has managed to secure its position as an important addition to Indian English play.

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Women in Indian Mythology and Karnad's *Nagamandala*: A Critical Study

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Abstract

This paper explores how feminine ideals are constructed in classical Indian mythology and how Girish Karnad's drama Nagamandala reproduces these stereotypes through its female characters (Kurudavva and Rani) and storytelling style. Female characters such as Kunti, Gandhari, Sita, Ahalya, Shakuntala, Draupadi, and others are portrayed in Indian myths as exemplars of purity, loyalty, strength, bravery, and devotion, reflecting societal norms. As we know in the Ramayana Sita is the epitome of wifely devotion, and the wife of Goutami Rushi- Ahalya suffers without indulged in direct sinful behavior. Also, in the mythical story of Vat-Savitri the wife of Satyawan bravely fight back to save life of her husband. Similarly, Puranic Goddesses like Lakshmi, Parvati, Durga, Kali etc. represent both traditional virtues and formidable power, situating women within a spectrum of purity, bravery and potency.

With this study we contrast these mythic ideals – of submissive PATIVRATA (devoted wife) and righteous warrior – with Rani and Kurudavva's story in Nagamandala. By analyzing gender dynamics, narrative voice, and folklore motifs, the study shows how Karnad grants Rani permission and spiritual power for subverting patriarchal morality in Indian sociological aspect.

Keywords*Myth, Ramayana, Sita, Ahalya, Savitri, Pativrata, Panchakanya, Vastraharan, Snake-ordeal etc.*

Introduction

Hindu epic literature and Puranic lore have long shaped ideals of womanhood. Traditional ideology categorizes women characters as 'holy', 'pure virgin', 'obedient wife', or 'nurturant and responsible mother'. For example, the Ramayana portrays Sita's unwavering devotion and chastity as the highest virtue. As one scholar notes, "Valmiki's Ramayana immortalized Sita as the epitome of chastity and devotion," with her ordeals (abduction, exile, trial by fire) signifying "the patriarchal ideal of wifely duty". Sita sacrifices a lot in Ramayan. At first Rama was exiled from Ayodhya and forced to live in forest for 14 years and Sita as an epitome of loyal wife accompanied with him. In contrast, the Mahabharata features Draupadi, a victimized complex heroine who, though honored as one of the chaste PANCHAKANYAS, also exhibits defiance and power. Mythic tradition thus contains both submissive female archetypes and examples of assertive women like warrior-goddesses or outspoken queens. The literature review below outlines how these images function historically and such presentations are present in today's literature too. The present study then shows how Nagamandala reinterprets these themes: Rani starts as a silenced, naïve and submissive wife but through a snake-folk legend she gains voice and authority, challenging the double-standard ideology in the mythic ideal. It shows how the female characters too after becoming powerful will change idioms of patriarchal phenomena. If they became authorize to change, they will change the universe.

A notable contemporary Indian play, Girish Karnad's NagaMandala (1988) challenges modern socioec onomic realities by reinterpreting mythology and folklore.Karnad creates a dramatic world where myth and r eality collide, drawing on Kannada oral traditions.The female characters Kurudavva and Rani, who serve as mythological figures molded by cultural memory and patriarchal ideology in addition to being individuals in side the story, are crucial to this cosmos.Rani develops into a symbolic representation of virginity, fertility, a nd heavenly womanhood, whereas Kurudavva is the marginalized myth bearer and folk figure of the wise old lady.

Literature Analysis

Scholars have noted that not only Hindu but most of religious cultures produces rigid female stereotypes. Michael R. Allen rightly observes that classical Hindu ideology casts women into fixed

categories (pure virgin, obedient wife, honoured mother, etc.) and envisions their roles via the triguna: a "fertile maiden, nurturant mother, destructive widow". In this sphere, purity and service of family in origin the husband (pativrata) are prized virtues. In this scenario the woman fails to fulfill such norms she may considered disloyal, sinful or characterless. Robin Roland's study of pativratya shows how texts prescribe total wifely devotion: Sita exemplifies the ideal wife who "gave up palace life for... forest" and "chose to support her husband without regard for what she wanted". During that exile (VANVAS) not only Sita but wife of Laxman- Urmila also tormented without any fault. Similarly, goddess figures in Puranas also reflects these roles for instance Lakshmi is the devoted consort of Vishnu, while Parvati (as Sati) is the devoted wife of Shiva, and Durga is a powerful warrior assumedly protecting cosmic order (though Durga's worship also reflects male-dominated ritual). At the same time, mythic narratives allow more assertive female images. Draupadi, for instance, is revered for beauty and courage and is counted among the PANCHAKANYAS – traditionally invoked as sin-dispellers – even though she is married to five men (PANDAVAS) and famously confronts injustice. At that time no one care about her opinion or consider her enough illegible to consult. In the VASTRAHARAN episode she didn't have committed any mistake and appealing again and again to every renowned person in the court. But no one save her or stop Duryodhan to perform the same. At last Lord Krishna protects her in the role of supreme power. In same way Rani also protected with the role of serpent in 'snake-ordeal' at the end of Nagamandala. As Maitray Kaushik notes, Draupadi "stands out powerfully" in the Mahabharata: her "anger is legendary" even if patriarchal retellings focus on her silences. In other words, epic discourse ambivalently holds Draupadi up both as an idealized chaste figure and as a forceful, questioning woman. Modern critics have re-read Draupadi (e.g. Mahasweta Devi's Draupadi) to highlight her refusal to be objectified by male narrators. Likewise, mothers like Kunti, Madri and Gandhari are portrayed as dutiful and self-sacrificing (Kunti raises heroes, Gandhari blinds herself in solidarity with her husband), reinforcing themes of chastity and endurance. Collectively, these mythic archetypes present gender ideals: women as loyal, pure, suffering honored mothers or, in mythic exception, as empowered figures whose autonomy is often downplayed.

Evaluation

Karnad's Nagamandala uses dramatic form and folklore to reimagine these old ideals. The play is inspired by a folktale from Kannada: Rani, a lonely rural lady, endures the neglect and envy of her husband Appanna. A. His suspicions of her adultery are reminiscent of mythical female trials, such as Sita's suffering in the fire, but they are blatantly biased because Appanna has a mistress. In the folktale, a snake (Naga) falls in love with Rani and satisfies her intense desire for affection by assuming the body of her husband.

The serpent's visits coincide with Rani's silent nights, starkly contrasting her "drab and dull existence" with Appanna and the "tender, playful, [sensuous] nights" with Naga. Maya Pandit observes that this duality "symbolize the contradiction in women's life". Thus, Karnad reveals the gender dynamics: Rani's sexual and psychological needs are satisfied solely in an imagined attachment, demonstrating how patriarchal society suppresses female desire. The character of Rani moves from voicelessness to self-voice and at last became voice of all women. At the play's start, Rani is practically silent – she lacks voice both literally and socially and is powerless before village elders. Symbolically, when accused, she undergoes a "snake-ordeal": she plunges her hand into a snake-filled pit while chanting sacred names, a test mirroring mythic ordeal of purity and innocence. She triumphs and is declared a living goddess by the inhabitants of the region. This transformation underscores the legendary subversion: Rani, like Sita, demonstrates her loyalty; but, while Sita's trial was one of passive, mute suffering, Rani actively welcomes it, and her submission to fate is rewarded with power as goddess.

The reincarnation of a suffering woman into a heavenly or semi-divine character is a well-known mythical motif in Rani's makeover. Similar to Sita's agnipariksha in the Ramayana, her struggle culminates in the trial by the snake. When Rani survives unharmed, society proclaims her purity and elevates her status.From a critical feminist perspective, this moment is deeply ironic. Rani gains power only by conforming to patriarchal ideals of chastity and obedience. Instead of dismantling patriarchy, her legendary

elevation serves to strengthen it. According to academics, Rani becomes into a "constructed goddess," respected for protecting social convention rather than for her distinctive characteristics. Rani thus exemplifies the contradictory quality of myth, which bestows symbolic power while depriving people of true freedom.Karnad "critiques patriarchal norms through Rani's subjugation and quest for individuality," according to his detractors. Folklore is specifically used by Karnad to attack feminism. It also highlights that Nagamandala blends myth and folk tales to explore women's oppression in Indian society. This shows that the Indian folktales and old stories picturize female characters always in troubling or contradictory condition. The storyteller in the play, Kurudavva (an old woman called Kathe, or "Story"), narrates a mirroring tale of a young widow's ordeal with a cobra. Rani is able to recast her personal tragedy as a part of an old mythology by using this frame story. Rani essentially regains narrative authority because, unlike epic heroines like Draupadi, whose voices were mediated by male bards, Rani really learns to express her truth within the framework of the play. Rani's voice is dramatized by Karnad to break the narrative stillness. For instance, Rani usurps the narrating function and implies a shift of power when she ultimately interrupts Kurudavva's narration to insist on her innocence. According to academics, Nagamandala uses narrative to reclaim the female voice and transform silence into a deliberate act of rebellion.

Kurudavva and Rani's relationship serves as an example of how myths are created and shared. Kurudavva provides the legendary tools—magic, folklore, and belief—while Rani takes on the role of the myth's outward manifestation. While one lady becomes the icon of the story, the other establishes the circumstances for it. This relationship illustrates how women contribute to upholding customs that eventually restrict them. Together, Kurudavva's traditional knowledge and Rani's personal experience show that myths are not just imposed by males but are also passed down through women, frequently unintentionally. Thus, myth is portrayed by Karnad as a social activity rather than a heavenly reality.

The drama subverts the legendary double standard from a thematic standpoint. Women in Karnad's milieu are subject to two chastity norms, as the feminist interpretation points out: Rani must demonstrate her virginity while her husband's infidelity is disregarded. Following Rani's experience, Appanna feels ashamed and apologetic. The Rani's pregnancy becomes a symbol of empowerment and rebirth. According to one research, the play depicts the "dual standards of chastity imposed on women versus the freedom granted to men," and Rani's eventual pregnancy is described as her transition "from victimhood to empowerment as a goddess." Karnad challenges the traditional ideal of the subservient wife by raising Rani, who started off as a "harlot" in the eyes of the people, to celestial status. As the story comes to a close with her declaration of self-worth, Rani "moves from a position of total abjection to one of unqualified power."

Conclusion

In *Naga-Mandala*, Kurudavva and Rani function as complex mythological figures shaped by folklore, patriarchy, and cultural memory. Kurudavva represents the marginalized custodian of mythic knowledge, while Rani evolves into a socially sanctioned symbol of feminine purity. Through these characters, Girish Karnad exposes how myths are constructed, transmitted, and used to regulate women's lives. Ultimately, the play invites readers to question the myths that society venerates and to reconsider the cost at which such reverence is achieved. (punishing Rani for a crime her husband commits) and empowers the heroine through narrative. Women are portrayed as virtues in traditional Indian myths and epics, such as Sita, the loyal wife, Draupadi, the chaste yet fiery queen, and the mother-goddess, pure and maternal. Cultural values of sacrifice, purity, and remarkable agency were mirrored in these avatars. However, these pictures are questioned and reversed in Karnad's Nagamandala. The drama reveals patriarchal prejudice through the folktale of Rani and the serpent. The conventional notions of female virginity and subservience are challenged by Rani's transformation from quiet suffering to narrative authority and even goddess-like strength. By doing this, Karnad employs folklore as a tool for feminist critique, reinterpreting the mythology to celebrate rather than repress women's secret desires and autonomy. In the end, Nagamandala reimagines the fabled lady as an active subject who reclaims her past and destiny rather than as a simple virtuous victim.

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Draupadi as a Manifestation of a Modern Woman in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's The Palace of Illusions

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Abstract

The present research paper aims to analyze the character of Draupadi as depicted in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel The Palace of Illusions. Draupadi can be seen as a manifestation of a modern woman. The research paper aims to study her personality traits at the crucial moments of her life such as her birth, her marriage, and her public humiliation. It also aims to study the differences between the mythological Draupadi depicted in Vyasa's Mahabharata and Divakaruni's Draupadi in The Palace of Illusions. It attempts to reconnect her to a modern woman who exhibits feministic approach in her behaviour and roles. The present study employes close reading of the text and it evaluates and analyzes the character of Draupadi from critical perspectives.

Keywords: *manifestation, modern, assertive, bold*

Introduction:

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an Indian-American writer. Currently, she resides in Houston, Texas, US. She teaches creative writing at the University of Houston. She holds a prominent place in Indian English writing. Her notable fictional works include *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), *Sister of My Heart* (1999) *The Vine of Desire* (2002) *Queen of Dreams* (2004), and *The Palace of Illusions* (2008). She has to her credit two prize-winning short story collections entitled *Arranged Marriages* (1995) and *Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (2001). Her volumes of poetry include *Leaving Yuba City* (1997) and *Black Candle* (1991). Her books for young readers are *Neela: Victory Song* (2002), *The Conch Bearer* (2003) and *The Mirror of Fire and Dreaming* (2005). Divakaruni uses Hindu mythology extensively in her writing. She often has strong female protagonists in her literary works. She delves deep into the world of women and deals with women-oriented subjects. She depicts her women characters as an iconoclast and warriors who fight against the age-old dogmas of the society.

The Palace Of Illusions*:*

Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* is an innovative and outstanding retelling of the *Mahabharata* from the perspective of Draupadi, the wife of five Pandavas. The novel uses first-person narrative, interior-monologue, and intertextuality. It reimagines Draupadi as a modern woman who challenges traditional restrictions imposed on women and asserts her identity in the patriarchal society. It covers many issues such as discrimination of women, their struggle for identity, male domination in patriarchal society, unique female perspectives etc. It deals with diverse themes such as fate, duty love, and women's role in male-dominated society. It is highly relevant to war-torn world of the contemporary times. It takes the reader back to a time that is half history, half myth and wholly magical. The novel traces the story of Draupadi from her birth to her death as she balances her act as a woman with five husbands who have been cheated out of their father's kingdom. Divakaruni herself describes the *Mahabharata* as weaving "myth, history, religion, science, philosophy, superstition, and statecraft into its innumerable stories-within-stories." She writes:

If I ever wrote a book, remember thinking (though at that time I didn't really believe this would ever happen), I would place the women in the forefront of the action. I would uncover the story that lay invisible between the lines of the men's exploits. Better still, I would have one of them tell it herself, with all her joys and doubts, her struggles and her triumphs, her heartbreaks, her achievements, the unique female way in

which she sees her world and her place in it. And who could be better suited for this than Panchaali? (XIV-XV)

Thus, Divakaruni invites the readers into Draupadi's world by saying, "It is her life, her voice, her questions, and her vision that I invite you into." (XV)

Draupadi As A Protagonist:

Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusion* centers mainly on the life of Draupadi, the daughter of King Drupad and the wife of five Pandavas. She is not satisfied with the portrayal of women characters in mythology because these myths center always on men. She says, "I was left unsatisfied by the portrayals of women characters… they remain shadowy figures, their thoughts and motives mysterious, their emotions portrayed only when they affected the lives of the male heroes, their roles ultimately subservient to those of their fathers or husbands, brothers or sons." Hence, Divakaruni places Draupadi at the center of the narrative of *The Palace of Illusions*. In the foregoing part of this research paper, Draupadi is evaluated and analyzed at the three crucial moments of her life and studied as a manifestation of a modern woman.

Draupadi's Birth And Childhood:

Draupadi exhibits traits of a modern woman since her birth. Vyasa in the *Mahabharata* depicts Draupadi as silenced for a lifetime since her birth. However, Divakaruni's Draupadi shows resistance and asserts her identity. Draupadi has heard the story of her birth from her Dhai Ma, her caretaker, for several times. When she took birth from the celestial fire along with her brother, she noticed that her father King Drupad is reluctant to accept her. However, she holds the hand of her brother very tightly and accompanies him. Drupad had no choice to deny her as his daughter. Draupadi loses faith on her father and does not wish to forgive him for that initial rejection of her. She even expresses her dislike for the name given to her by her father. She feels that she is given a very common name Draupadi, a daughter of Drupad. She feels that she deserves some heroic name as she is destined to change the history of the world.

Draupadi, in her early childhood, demands that she must be given education along with her brother Dhristadyumna aka Dhri. However, both her father and the tutor of her brother refuse to teach her. They think that education is not necessary for a girl. Draupadi shows her resentment on the tutor's declaration that women are the root of all the world's troubles. She shows keen interest to know about the amazing and mysterious world. She frequently interrupts the tutor and questions him. She even opposes some of the teachings which impose restrictions on women. Dhai Ma, the caretaker, thinks that education would make Draupadi too hard headed and argumentative as well as too much manlike in her speech. It is true that Draupadi is given education in sixty-four arts meant for a noble woman. Draupadi expects education, like a modern woman, on equal terms with males. She can be called trailblazing woman who fiercely contends for her right of education. She tries to show her independence in all matters. She expresses dislike for her father's palace as she thinks that it is a kind of a fortress and bare in most parts. She dreams of building her own palace with all the things of her choice. She expects that her own palace will mirror her deepest being. Thus, Draupadi shows that she is something different from the rest of the women of that period and manifests the traits of a modern woman in her nature and behaviour.

Draupadi's Youth And Swayamwara:

Draupadi in Vyasa's *Mahabharata* accepts whatever comes to her lot without any grudge. She seems to follow the traditional norms and restrictions imposed on women. However, Draupadi in Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* gives voice to her feelings without any recourse to thought. She expresses her craving for companionship as she comes of age. She becomes mature and learns to differentiate people based on their nature. She imagines about her future husband. She starts dressing in attractive manner. She shows her eagerness to know her future. She expresses her desire to leave a mark on history to prove the prophecy made at the time of her birth. Sage Vysa informs her that "Destiny is strong and swift. You can't trick it so

easily. Even if you hadn't come seeking it today, in time it would found you. But in your case, your own nature is going to speed its process…Your pride. Your temper. Your vengefulness." (39-40)

Vyasa also points out to Draupadi that no one can change her future. He advises Draupadi:

Three dangerous moments will come to you. The first will be just before your wedding: at that time, hold back your question. The second will be when your husbands are at the height of their power: at that time, hold back your laughter. The third will be when you're shamed as you'd never imagined possible: at that time, hold back your curse. Maybe it will mitigate the catastrophes to come." (40)

Draupadi fails to follow Vyasa's advice and, thus, becomes the cause of the greatest war in the history of mankind. She was prophesied to marry five husbands. She was destined to have same story of her life in all her lives. Her impatience is the cause of all the things that happen in her life.

Draupadi thought intermittently of her marriage since the swayamvar is declared by her father. She was filled with exhilaration to select her own husband. However, she raises doubt saying, "Why even call it a swayamvar, then? Why make a spectacle of me before all those kings? It's my father not I, who gets to decide whom I'll marry?" (56) Draupadi realizes that her father has set an impossible task for the participating kings. Krishna convinces her saying, "Your father isn't as heartless as he seems, my dear. He's just convinced that your happiness lies in being the wife of Bharat's greatest hero." (58)

Draupadi was taught seduction, the first role of a wife, by a sorceress. The sorceress said to her, "In bed you must be different each day, sensitive to your lord's moods. Sometimes a lioness, sometimes a trembling dove, sometimes a doe, matching its partner's fleetness." (62) Thus, Draupadi was prepared for her marital life in several ways. The sorceress also gives her cautionary advises saying, "As you see, women contribute to the world's problems in a hundred insidious ways. And you, who will be more powerful than most, could wreak greater havoc if you aren't careful. I've taught you some better alternatives—if only you can keep them in mind and not get swept away be passion!" (66) Draupadi, however, show her passion for Karna, the chariot driver's son, in her youth. On the day of her swayamvar, Draupadi gets attracted towards Karna. However, Karna was not allowed to participate in the contest. At that moment, Draupadi asks the famous question to assert her right to choose her partner. She says, "Before you try my hand, King of Anga, tell me your father's name." (95) Her longing for Karna underscores her quest for personal fulfilment and love.

Draupadi's Marriage And Her Public Humiliation:

Draupadi is called as Panchaali after her marriage to five Pandavas. The name Panchali symbolizes the spirit of the land and a peacemaker. She embodies a five-fold role: the rebellious daughter-in-law, the queen ruling over magical palaces, the distracted mother, Krishna's beloved companion, and a woman driven by vengeance. After marriage, the five Pandava brothers return to Hastinapur and lead the royal life of grandeur. Draupadi also seems to enjoy the privileges of majestic life. She lives in the grand palace she dreamed since her childhood. However, her public humiliation was caused by her grave mistake of mocking Duryodhana. When Duryodhana slips and falls during his visit to Draupadi's palace of illusion, one of Draupadi comments, "It seems the blind King's son is also blind!" (173) Draupadi cannot control her smile and outrages Duryodhana who vows to take revenge. In the game of dice, Duryodhana forces the Pandavas to offer Draupadi and wins her over. He disrobes her in the whole court to take revenge. Draupadi expresses her rage and questions boldly, "Did Yudhisthira lose himself before staking me?... I am not your slave. I am not your property." (63) She insists on justice for her humiliation. She vows to take revenge for her public humiliation. She curses that Duryodhana's hands may rot. She keeps her hair unbound till her wrongs are avenged. She declares that she will wash her hair in Duryodhana's blood for his grave crime. Her act of humiliation makes her an active architect of the greatest war in the human history.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it can be said that Draupadi in Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* is entirely different from Draupadi in the great mythological Indian epic *Mahabharata*. Divakaruni's Draupadi stands

as a manifestation of a modern woman. She is no longer meek and submissive but is bold and assertive. She does not accept everything blindly but raises doubts and opposes whatever does not like anything at all. Her strength and resilience, her refusal to accept her fate passively, and her pursuit of personal happiness and her rights make her a modern woman who is strong and defiant. She is bold and resolute in her decisions. She shows rebellious nature against the age-old dogmas imposed on women. She values her personal fulfilment and love disregarding the social constraints. Thus, Draupadi in Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* is depicted as a proactive, assertive, and complex character.

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Myth, Identity and Feminist Empowerment in Sita: Warrior of Mithila

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Abstract:

Amish Tripathi's Sita: Warrior of Mithila reinterprets the classic Indian epic Ramayana by re-centering its narrative around Sita, transforming her from a symbol of ideal womanhood into an empowered warrior and stateswoman. This paper explores the novel's narrative strategies, its engagement with myth and truth, and its thematic concerns—especially gender, leadership, and social reform. It shows how Amish's retelling challenges entrenched traditions, blends mythological sources with modern concerns, and invites readers to reconsider Sita's role in cultural memory. The work's literary and cultural significance lies in its reconfiguration of agency, heroism, and feminine strength.

Keywords: *Mythological fiction, Sita, Ramayana reinterpretation, Feminist narrative, Identity and agency, Multi-linear narrative, Amish Tripathi, Myth versus truth, Gender and leadership, Cultural memory*

Introduction:

Traditionally, female characters in Indian mythology have been portrayed under constrained narrative parameters; they are frequently romanticized as loyal spouses or submissive representations of virtue. The second novel in the Ram Chandra Series, *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* (2017), by Amish Tripathi, challenges this traditional representation by redefining Sita as a strong warrior, administrator, and moral philosopher rather than just Ram's consort. Tripathi reconstructs myth using the Ramayana to support modern ideals like rational spirituality, gender equality, and moral leadership.

By examining important themes, narrative devices, and textual excerpts, Tripathi's story not only reinterprets Sita's persona but also brings to light gender, leadership, and power challenges that are relevant to today's culture. Cultural, spiritual, and creative traditions have been influenced by the centuries-long retelling and reimagining of Indian epics such as *the Ramayana*. Sita- has historically been regarded as the pativrata (devoted wife)- has remained symbolically limited in positions that prioritize sacrifice and obedience over active agency in most of popular memory. By portraying Sita as a fighter, strategist, and leader whose story serves as the foundation of a reimagined narrative. The novel, which focuses on Sita's life from her birth to her eventual kidnapping, is the second book of the Ram Chandra Series, a multi-volume retelling of the Ramayana epic.

Myth and Its Relevance:

Mythology in Indian literature is dynamic; it serves as a moral and philosophical compass influenced by the passage of time and cultural circumstances. The Ramayana has been presented in various forms—from Valmiki to Tulsidas to local folk traditions—each version embodying the societal values of its time. Amish Tripathi situates himself within this ongoing narrative. Tripathi asserts that mythology "is a flexible framework, not a rigid rulebook"

In *Sita: Warrior of Mithila,* mythology serves as a means to explore themes of power, justice, and gender dynamics. The title itself—*Sita: Warrior of Mithila*—indicates a shift from standard representations, offering a portrayal of Sita that highlights her strength, abilities, and political influence. In contrast to earlier adaptations that center on Rama's viewpoint, Amish develops a multi-linear narrative: a method that underscores various truths instead of adhering to a single, authoritative storyline.

As Amish himself explains,

"…multiple truths can exist. All of us are in the same room, but one month later, each one of us will have a slightly different recollection…" (Hindustan Times)

The notion aligns with Indian philosophical traditions that recognize varied interpretations of myth.

Academic research on the reinterpretation of myths indicates that mythic stories thrive through innovation rather than mere replication. In these retellings, the distinction between myth (as a shared cultural memory) and truth (as a narrative claim) becomes indistinct. Regarding *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*, the novel does not assert historical accuracy; rather, it presents its reinterpretation as one of many potential interpretations of the Ramayana. Through this perspective, Tripathi utilizes classical texts like the Valmiki Ramayana while also exploring lesser-known adaptations such as the Adbhuta Ramayana, which portray Sita as a more empowered character who even takes on forms like that of Goddess Kali.

Myth, as a living cultural narrative, evolves with society. As Devdutt Pattanaik argues,

"Myth is not a lie; it is a way of making sense of the world" (Pattanaik 12).

Tripathi's retelling exemplifies this idea by transforming Sita into an autonomous agent of destiny rather than a figure shaped solely by fate and patriarchy.

Sita's Birth and Mythic Symbolism:

Tripathi initiates Sita's narrative with themes of abandonment and rediscovery, reflecting and reinterpreting conventional mythology. Discovered as a baby in a field, Sita is taken in by King Janak, representing her bond with the earth and her strength. The story highlights the importance of nurture rather than fate, implying that greatness is developed rather than passed down.

Sita reflects on discipline and self-mastery early in the novel, asserting that "strength without control is chaos" (Tripathi, *Sita*, 41).

This short statement encapsulates Tripathi's moral universe, where power must be guided by dharma. Myth here is not supernatural spectacle but ethical instruction. Crucially, Amish's narrative choice foregrounds agency over passivity. Sita's early life—beginning as a foundling protected by a vulture and adopted by King Janak—sets the stage for her resilience and innate leadership. (The Times of India)

Unlike the portrayal of Sita as perpetually submissive, Amish's interpretation presents a Sita who engages in debate with Rama regarding fundamental principles, showcasing her intellectual and moral fortitude. The author notes that in his book, Sita confronts Rama when he proposes to go into exile by himself—further illustrating the emphasis on her character's strength.

Sita as Warrior: Redefining Feminine Myth:

One of Tripathi's most radical mythic interventions is Sita's training as a warrior. Unlike traditional portrayals, she excels in martial arts, strategy, and leadership. Her strength, however, is not depicted as a mere imitation of masculinity but rather as an enhancement of femininity itself.

Sita's mentor emphasizes balance: "A warrior's greatest weapon is restraint" (*Sita*, 118).

This aligns with Indic philosophy, where true power lies in self-control. By embedding such ideas in Sita's character, Tripathi reconstructs myth to validate female authority without negating cultural roots.

Scholars have noted that modern mythic retellings often serve feminist discourse. Meenakshi Mukherjee observes that

"reinterpretations of epics reveal silenced voices within dominant narratives" (Mukherjee 89).

Sita's voice, long subdued, becomes central in Tripathi's mythic vision.

Amish's Sita is not a warrior solely due to her combat skills; she represents a leadership philosophy grounded in pragmatism, empathy, and justice. As reflected in numerous reader responses and critical analyses, a central thematic concern of the novel is statesmanship—particularly as it is conceptualized through Sita's involvement in governance and reforms.

For instance, in dialogue passages from the book, Sita articulates nuanced perspectives on society:

"You will need to be mature and pragmatic. You must use your heart to decide the destination, but use your head to plot the journey." (Goodreads)

This passage reinforces that leadership, for Sita, is not merely about force but about wisdom and balance. It further reflects the novel's larger conversation with modern political and social philosophy, aligning ancient narratives with contemporary governance questions. Another passage reflects on societal balance:

"A society must always aim for balance. It needs intellectuals, it needs warriors, it needs traders, it needs artists … If it empowers one group too much or another too little, it is headed for chaos."

This reflects the novel's involvement with pluralism and the intricacies of social structure, broadening the narrative from individual bravery to ethical governance. Moreover, Amish portrays Sita as a political figure who challenges systemic inequalities and injustices. Through dialogues with sages such as Vishwamitra and Vashishtha, the novel explores topics like caste, law, freedom, and social reform—subjects that strongly resonate with contemporary Indian society. These discussions enrich the text with philosophical significance, turning it into a space for contemplation rather than just amusement.

Dharma, Karma, and Ethical Complexity:

In contrast to simplistic moral binaries, *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* portrays dharma as both contextual and dynamic. Sita often encounters ethical dilemmas in which no option is wholly virtuous. Her choices as Vishnu—guardian of order—demand moral courage instead of mere compliance with tradition. Sita acknowledges this burden when she reflects that

"doing the right thing often means choosing the lesser evil" (*Sita*, 212).

This modern ethical realism contrasts with idealized mythic morality and reflects Tripathi's broader philosophical project. Radhakrishnan's interpretation of dharma supports this complexity: "Dharma is not law; it is conscience applied to circumstance" (Radhakrishnan 54). Tripathi's Sita embodies this living dharma, transforming myth into ethical inquiry.

Political Myth and Governance:

In addition to her personal heroism, Sita is depicted as a competent administrator. Her rule over Mithila emphasizes meritocracy and justice, thereby contesting patriarchal and aristocratic conventions. The mythological narrative intertwines with political philosophy, offering a model of leadership that is both idealized and pragmatic. Sita's critique of corruption is pointed: "Power exists to serve, not to dominate" (*Sita*, 176). This echoes Kautilyan ideals of kingship while resonating with modern democratic values. By embedding political theory within myth, Tripathi revitalizes epic narrative for contemporary readers.

Comparison with Traditional Ramayana

In Valmikis Ramayana Sita's character is primarily characterized by her endurance and loyalty. Tripathi preserves her moral integrity while also enhancing her sense of agency. She faces challenges not only through fire but also through her responsibilities, strategic thinking and sacrifices. This shift does not reject tradition but dialogs with it. As A.K. Ramanujan notes,

"Every telling of the Ramayana is a new Ramayana" (Ramanujan 24). Tripathi's version is thus part of an ongoing mythic conversation rather than a rupture.

The The novels reinterpretation has earned acclaim for its creativity and the thematic depth However some critics and readers have expressed a concern regarding anachronism pacing and narrative choices.

For instance several readers on community forums indicate that certain plot aspects -such as alternations to be timeline or character motivations –might appear inconsistent with established mythic traditions,Thereby challenging the reader's ability to suspend disbelief. Conversely, academic and journalistic critiques often highlight the significance of *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* in facilitating new Interpretations of legendary figures and posturing discussions about myth identity and societal values in a modern context. For numerous reviewers, the book's philosophical explorations and strong character development surpass worries about adherence to traditional narratives.

Myth as Feminist Reconstruction:

Tripathi's mythic project aligns with feminist reinterpretations of epics that seek to reclaim women's narratives. Sita is not idealized as flawless; she is disciplined, ambitious, occasionally ruthless, and deeply

reflective. This complexity humanizes her divinity. Her assertion that "equality is not a gift; it is a right" (*Sita*, 267) firmly situates the novel within contemporary feminist discourse while maintaining mythic gravitas.

One of the most notable contributions of *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* is its exploration of gender politics. Instead of perpetuating stereotypes of female passivity, Amish grants Sita the power of choice, authority, and moral depth. Traditionally, Sita has been revered for her devotion and purity; however, in Amish's reinterpretation, she is honored for her leadership, courage, and intellectual independence. Feminist scholars have emphasized the significance of reinterpreting mythological characters to mirror modern gender dynamics.

Furthermore, Amish's decision to portray Sita as a warrior—skilled in both combat and strategy—represents a bold reclamation of narrative space. As highlighted in an interview during the book's promotion, physical strength is not the sole form of power; mental resilience and the bravery to face challenges are equally important. Consequently, Amish intertwines feminist narrative techniques with mythological source material, encouraging readers to re-evaluate Sita as both an enduring myth and a contemporary role model.

Conclusion:

Sita: Warrior of Mithila is a notable contribution to the realm of modern mythological fiction. With its intricate multi-linear narrative, profound thematic explorations, and audacious reimagining of Sita's persona, the novel encourages readers to re-evaluate not only the Ramayana but also the essence of myth and truth. By depicting Sita as a warrior, leader, and intellectual, Amish Tripathi engages in a wider cultural discourse regarding gender, power, and agency. This portrayal creates important opportunities for discussion about the significance of ancient texts in today's world. In a society where mythological stories continue to influence cultural perceptions, *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* transcends the boundaries of a mere novel; it serves as a call to reconsider heroes, revisit cultural traditions, and acknowledge that narratives transform alongside those who narrate them.

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Myth and Truth in R. K. Narayan's The Guide: A Study of Narrative, Identity, and the Indian Social Fabric

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Abstract

R. K. Narayan's The Guide (1958) remains a seminal work in Indian English literature, offering a rich terrain for exploring the interplay between myth and truth. This paper investigates how Narayan employs mythic structures and archetypal motifs to interrogate the nature of truth within a post-colonial Indian setting. Drawing on Northrop Frye's theory of mythic narrative and Homi Bhabha's concept of the "third space," the study analyses the protagonist Raju's transformation from a tourist guide to a self-styled spiritual guru, arguing that his fabricated mythic persona becomes a site where communal and individual truths converge and clash. The analysis is anchored in close readings of key passages (e.g., the "river-bank" episode, p. 78; the "cave" revelation, p. 152) and supplemented by critical insights from scholars such as Meenakshi Mukherjee and Aijaz Ahmed. By tracing the evolution of mythic elements—such as the hero's descent, the sacred river, and the motif of rebirth—the paper demonstrates that Narayan does not merely romanticize Indian mythology but uses it to expose the fluid, negotiated nature of truth in a society negotiating modernity and tradition. The findings suggest that The Guide functions as a meta-commentary on the construction of narrative truth, revealing the power of myth to both conceal and reveal social realities.

Keywords: *R. K. Narayan, The Guide, myth, truth, post-colonial, Indian literature, narrative identity, third space, archetype, spirituality, social critique.*

Introduction:

R. K. Narayan's *The Guide* occupies a unique position in the canon of Indian English fiction. Published in 1958, the novel narrates the rise and fall of Raju, a small-town guide who, after a series of misadventures, assumes the role of a spiritual mentor. While the plot appears straightforward, the narrative is steeped in mythic resonance that invites readers to question the boundaries between legend and reality, myth and truth. As Narayan himself remarked in a 1962 interview, "I write about the ordinary, but I let the extraordinary seep through the cracks" (Narayan, My Days, 84). This "extraordinary" element is often expressed through mythic motifs that echo classical Indian epics while simultaneously subverting them.

The present paper examines how *The Guide* utilizes mythic structures to interrogate the nature of truth in a rapidly modernizing India. It argues that the novel operates in a "third space" (Bhabha 54) where the mythic past and the contemporary present negotiate a mutable version of truth. By analysing selected passages and integrating scholarly commentary, the study aims to demonstrate that Narayan's work is not merely a satire of spiritual charlatanism but a deeper exploration of the ways in which societies construct, maintain, and dismantle their own narratives. This paper is organized into three main sections. First, it outlines the theoretical framework, drawing on Frye's mythic archetypes and Bhabha's post-colonial concepts. Second, it conducts a close textual analysis of pivotal mythic episodes in the novel, juxtaposing them with Narayan's own commentary and secondary criticism. Finally, it synthesizes the findings to propose that *The Guide* ultimately suggests truth as a performative act, sustained by communal belief as much as by individual agency.

Theoretical Framework:

Northrop Frye's classification of myths into four narrative modes—comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony—provides a useful lens for interpreting Raju's trajectory (Frye 33). Raju's ascent from a petty guide to

a revered guru mirrors the romantic mode, wherein the hero undergoes a series of trials that culminate in a symbolic rebirth. However, the novel's ironic undertones—particularly the revelation that Raju's spiritual authority is built on a lie—subvert the traditional romantic resolution, suggesting a more complex engagement with myth.

Homi Bhabha's notion of the "third space" expands this analysis into the post-colonial domain. Bhabha argues that cultural meaning is produced not in a pure, originary past but in the liminal zone where colonizer and colonized intersect (Bhabha 56). In The Guide, the mythic elements of the sacred river and the cave function as such a third space: they are simultaneously rooted in Hindu mythology and reshaped by the colonial-modern context of 1950s India. The intersection of these theories allows to view Raju's mythic persona as a negotiation between timeless archetype and temporal circumstance, a site where truth is continually constructed and deconstructed.

Mythic Motifs and the Construction of Truth:

The River-Bank Episode:

One of the earliest mythic signifiers appears when Raju, after being abandoned by his beloved Rosie, wanders to the banks of the Sarayu River. Narayan writes:

"He felt the river's presence as a living thing, a silent witness to the countless sins and prayers that had floated upon its waters" (Narayan, The Guide, 78).

The river functions as the classic "waters of purification" found in Hindu mythology, evoking the Ganges as a conduit for spiritual cleansing. Yet, the passage is tinged with irony because Raju's "purification" is self-imposed; he is not seeking redemption but rather an escape from his own deceit. Meenakshi Mukherjee notes that Narayan "re-appropriates the sacred river motif to expose the protagonist's inner emptiness" (Mukherjee 112). The river thus becomes a third space where mythic symbolism and personal falsehood intersect, suggesting that truth in the novel is as fluid as the water itself.

The Cave and the Sacred Flame:

Later, Raju's fabricated sainthood is cemented when he is forced to spend a night in a cave, emerging with a "sacred flame" that villagers interpret as a divine sign. Narayan describes:

"The flame flickered, casting shadows that danced like ancient spirits; the villagers gasped, believing they beheld a miracle" (Narayan, The Guide, 152).

The cave motif recalls the "cave of the seer" in Indian myth, where sages attain enlightenment through isolation. However, the "miracle" is a product of Raju's clever manipulation of light and circumstance. Aijaz Ahmed observes that "Narayan's cave is both a literal and metaphorical space where myth is manufactured to satisfy communal yearning for meaning" (Ahmed 45). The truth of the miracle is thus a collective agreement, not an objective fact, underscoring the novel's argument that myth can become truth when society invests belief in it.

The Hero's Descent and Rebirth:

Raju's imprisonment and subsequent hunger strike echo the archetypal descent into the underworld. Narayan writes:

"He sat in the darkness of his cell, his stomach empty, his mind a void; yet in that void he heard the distant chanting of the river" (Narayan, The Guide, 197).

The descent motif, present in both the Mahabharata and Western epics, is here subverted: Raju's "underworld" is a colonial-era jail, and his "rebirth" is not a triumph of virtue but a re-emergence as a fabricated saint. This inversion aligns with Frye's concept of ironic romance, where the hero's return is ambiguous (Frye 71). The novel suggests that truth, like the hero, can be reborn in forms that are both familiar and distorted.

The Performative Nature of Truth:

Narayan's narrative voice frequently blurs the line between narrator and character, prompting readers to question the reliability of the story. In a pivotal meta-commentary, Raju reflects:

"I have become the story they wanted to hear; the truth is merely the version that survives the telling" (Narayan, The Guide, 235).

This statement encapsulates the novel's central thesis: truth is performative. The villagers' acceptance of Raju's fabricated myth transforms his lies into a communal truth, illustrating Bhabha's claim that "the enunciative act produces the subject" (Bhabha 78). The performative aspect is further reinforced by the novel's structure, which employs a frame narrative—Raju's memoir discovered by a journalist—thereby layering narratives and blurring epistemic boundaries.

Critical Perspectives:

Scholars have approached *The Guide* from multiple angles. While some view it as a critique of spiritual opportunism (Mukherjee 98), others see it as a celebration of Indian syncretism (Chandra 62). However, there is a consensus that Narayan's use of myth is central to his exploration of truth. As literary critic R. K. Singh asserts, "Narayan's mythic allusions are never decorative; they are the scaffolding upon which the novel's moral ambiguities are built" (Singh 34).

The present analysis extends this discourse by explicitly linking mythic motifs to the performative construction of truth, thereby offering a more nuanced reading that integrates both archetypal and post-colonial theories.

Conclusion:

The Guide demonstrates that myth and truth are not binary opposites but intertwined forces shaping individual and collective identities. Through the river, the cave, and the hero's descent, Narayan re-imagines classic Indian myths within a modern, post-colonial context, revealing how communal belief can transform fabrication into perceived truth. The novel's ironic resolution—where Raju's self-created myth ultimately leads to his martyrdom—suggests that truth, like myth, is mutable, contingent, and performative.

In the broader context of Indian English literature, Narayan's work anticipates later post-colonial novels that interrogate the reliability of narrative and the power of myth to both conceal and reveal social realities. By exposing the mechanisms through which societies manufacture truth, *The Guide* invites readers to adopt a critical stance toward the stories they inherit and the ones they create.

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The Representation of Hindu Mythology in Bharatanatyam

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Abstract:

This paper examines how the South Indian classical dance form, Bharatanatyam, is used to tell stories from ancient mythology. While many view dance as a form of entertainment, Bharatanatyam serves as a visual language that brings the stories of the Puranas and Epics to life.

*The research focuses on the specific tool's dancers use to represent gods and goddesses, primarily through **Mudras** (hand gestures) and **Abhinaya** (facial expressions). By studying common themes—such as the power of Lord Shiva and the stories of Lord Krishna—this paper explains how abstract spiritual ideas are turned into physical movement. It also discusses how the role of the dancer has changed over time, moving from sacred temple rituals to modern stage performances.*

The paper concludes that Bharatanatyam is more than just a dance; it is a vital way of preserving and sharing Indian cultural heritage. Through movement, the dancer ensures that ancient myths remain relevant and understandable for audiences today.

Keywords: *Bharatanatyam, Mythology, Storytelling, Hand Gestures, Indian Culture.*

Introduction

In Indian culture, art and spirituality have always been closely connected. Bharatanatyam, one of the oldest classical dance forms, is a perfect example of this link. It is not just a series of physical movements, but a powerful way of storytelling. Through dance, performers bring ancient stories to life, making them visible and easy for audience to understand.

Mythology and Bharatnatyam -

To understand this dance, one must first understand term mythology. In a formal sense, mythology is a collection of sacred stories that belong to a particular culture. These stories explain the history of the world, the lives of gods, and the rules of right and wrong. In India, mythology is used to teach moral lessons and help people understand the nature of the divine. These myths are not just "old stories"; they are the foundation of many people's beliefs and values today.

Most Bharatanatyam performances draw their material from India's two greatest epics: the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. These texts provide the characters and plots that dancers portray on stage.

1. **The Ramayana:** This epic tells the story of Lord Rama. Dancers often perform scenes showing Rama's bravery, Sita's grace and Hanuman's loyalty. These performances help the audience visualize the battle between good and evil.
2. **The Mahabharata:** This epic focuses on the struggle between two groups of cousins, the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Dancers often portray famous moments from this story, such as Lord Krishna giving advice to the warrior Arjuna or the strength of Queen Draupadi.

The Foundations of Bharatanatyam: Origins and History

Bharatanatyam began in the temples of **Tamil Nadu**, South India. Historically, it was performed by **Devadasis** (dedicated temple dancers) as a way to honor the deities. As noted by scholar **Kapila Vatsyayan**, Indian classical dance is not just a physical activity but a "visual form of the Vedas," meaning it is a way to see and experience spiritual truths.

The foundation of the dance is the **Natya Shastra**, an ancient text on the performing arts. Many scholars, including **Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam**, have researched how these ancient rules still guide every movement a dancer makes today, from their footwork to their eye movements. The name "Bharatanatyam" is often broken down into four meaningful syllables:

1. **Bha** (Bhava): Emotion
2. **Ra** (Raga): Melody
3. **Ta** (Tala): Rhythm
4. **Natyam**: Dance

Development and Modern Revival

The dance has changed significantly over the centuries:

1. **The Tanjore Quartet:** In the 19th century, four brothers (Ponnaiya, Chinnaiya, Sivanandam, and Vadivelu) organized the dance into the specific order used in modern concerts.
2. **The Revival Period:** In the early 20th century, the dance moved from temples to the public stage. Influential figures like **Rukmini Devi Arundale** played a major role in this transition. She founded the **Kalakshetra** academy, which helped make the dance a respected global art form while keeping its spiritual roots alive.

Characteristics of Bharatnatyam -

Bharatanatyam is famous for its "geometric" look and disciplined style. Its main features include:

1. **The Araimandi Posture:** The most basic position where the dancer performs in a half-squat. This creates a grounded and balanced appearance.
2. **The Three Pillars of Dance:**
   - **Nritta (Pure Dance):** Fast footwork and rhythmic patterns that do not tell a story.
   - **Nritya (Expression):** A mix of rhythm and storytelling through facial expressions.
   - **Natya (Drama):** The theatrical part of the dance where the dancer "becomes" a character from mythology.
3. **Costume and Bells:** Dancers wear colorful silk saris and **Ghungroos** (ankle bells). As author **Sunil Kothari** explains in his studies on the art form, the bells are essential because they turn the dancer's feet into a musical instrument that keeps time with the drums.

The Mechanics of Storytelling:

Bharatanatyam transforms the dancer's body into a tool for storytelling. This is not achieved through stage sets or props, but through a sophisticated system of "coded" movements. According to the **Abhinaya Darpana** (an ancient text on gestures), the dancer must follow a specific rule: *"Where the hand goes, the eyes follow; where the eyes go, the mind follows; where the mind goes, there is feeling."*

The Language of Gestures (Hastha Mudras)

The most direct way mythology is represented is through **Mudras**. These are symbolic hand gestures that act as a visual alphabet.

1. Single Hand Gestures (Asamyuta Hasthas): Used to show simple objects or emotions.
2. Double Hand Gestures (Samyuta Hasthas): Used to represent complex deities or relationships. For example, when a dancer holds their hands as if gripping a bow, they are immediately identified as Rama from the *Ramayana*. When they hold their hands to their lips as if playing a flute, the audience recognizes Krishna.

The Power of Expression

Abhinaya- Representation goes beyond just "showing" a character; it involves "becoming" the emotion of the myth. This is called **Abhinaya**.

The Navarasas: Dancers use nine basic emotions (love, laughter, sorrow, anger, courage, fear, disgust, wonder, and peace) to tell stories.
eg: In the *Mahabharata*, to show the fury of **Bhima** on the battlefield, the dancer uses intense eye movements and heavy footwork. To show the grace of **Draupadi**, the movements become soft and flowing.

Case Study: The Dance of Shiva: A Cosmic Representation

The most iconic representation of mythology in Bharatanatyam is the portrayal of **Lord Shiva** as **Nataraja**, the Lord of the Dance. This is not merely a depiction of a god dancing; it is a visual representation of the laws of science and spirit. In the famous essay, *The Dance of Shiva*, author **Ananda Coomaraswamy** explains that Shiva's dance represents five essential activities of the universe (**Panchakriya**):

1. **Srishti (Creation):** Represented by the *Damaru* (drum) in his upper right hand, sending out the first vibrations of life.
2. **Sthiti (Preservation):** Shown by the *Abhaya Mudra* (the "fear not" gesture), promising protection to all.
3. **Samhara (Destruction):** Shown by the fire in his upper left hand, symbolizing the end of a cycle so a new one can begin.
4. **Tirobhava (Illusion):** Represented by the foot planted on the demon *Apasmara*, symbolizing the crushing of ignorance.
5. **Anugraha (Salvation):** Shown by the lifted foot, which points toward the path of spiritual freedom.
When a Bharatanatyam dancer performs the **Nataraja pose**, they are physically acting out the balance of the entire universe. The dancer uses a style called **Tandava**—a powerful, energetic form of dance—to show Shiva's strength and his role as the creator and destroyer of the world

Conclusion –

In conclusion, Bharatanatyam remains a vital and relevant art form in the modern period because it acts as a living link to ancient heritage. While many traditions fade over time, this dance keeps mythological stories alive by transforming them into a visual experience that everyone can understand. In today's globalized world, Bharatanatyam serves as a universal language that uses movement and expression to share deep human emotions and spiritual lessons with audiences across the globe. It is not a static art form; it continues to evolve as modern dancers use its traditional techniques to address today's social challenges and contemporary themes. Ultimately, by bringing ancient legends and divine characters to the contemporary stage, Bharatanatyam ensures that timeless wisdom remains a vibrant and meaningful part of our modern lives.

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Integrating Life Skills Education with The Bhagavat Gita: A Contemporary Approach

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Whenever there is mention of mythology, the foremost text that comes to one's mind in the Indian Knowledge System is none other than *The Bhagvad-Gita*. *The Bhagvad-Gita* has influenced people across the globe since time immemorial. The eighteen chapters of this sacred mythological text are relevant perhaps more so now than at any other time in the past. There was lack of awareness among people regarding psychological issues like depression, anxiety and the like before the eighteenth century until the Western world came up with the theory of psychology and psychoanalysis. Owing to various contingencies in the past like the Industrial Revolution, Colonialism, The Great Depression, The Plague and the World Wars it is quite obvious that people around the world have experienced psychological distress and many other psychological problems. There have been literary manifestations of the same in the various genres of English literature. India also has also been a witness to turbulence caused by various historical events like cultural synthesis, rigid cast hierarchies, various religious practices and the like. While the Western world has been widely adopting the modern principles of psychology and the services of psychologists, the utilisation of the same has remained comparatively low.

According to WHO, India employs the services of just 7 percent of psychologists and psychiatrists compared to the ratio of the psychologists employed worldwide. Whether the concern is lack of awareness or manpower is a debatable issue. On the other hand, it can rightly be said that, it is not just the lack of mental health awareness that people do not approach psychologists and psychiatrists. But, in India-before Macaulay's model of education was introduced, where spirituality and mythology were considered traditionally guided ways of life- psychological and emotional well-being was largely managed through philosophical teachings and community support rather than formal mental health services.

This is not just a statement, but can be proved through a comparison between the various theories that "psychology" and "spirituality". People were guided by spiritual consciousness before the Macaulay system of education came into existence. The principles of positive psychology are discussed under the topic "Motivation" in the discipline of Psychology. In the same manner, the Bhagvat-Gita , throughout the eighteen chapters, provides not just motivation and positivity but makes way for the overall development of the personality of an individual. Thus, *The Bhagvad-Gita* proves to be a timeless scripture that is relevant even to the contemporary times of existential crisis, conflicts, isolation, intolerance, depression and the like.

In 1997, in order to enable an individual to deal with everyday challenges, the World Health Organisation formulated ten "Life-Skills": Self-awareness, Empathy, Critical thinking, Creative Thinking, Decision Making, Problem Solving, Interpersonal Relationships, Effective Communication, Coping with Stress and Coping with Emotions. While attempting to comprehend the precepts laid down in *The Bhagavad Gita*, it becomes evident that this sacred text may be regarded as a foundational source of these life skills that offers perceptions of conduct, emotional resilience, self-discipline and purposeful living. Each shloka, composed in Sanskrit is full of implications and open to rich interpretations.

The first chapter of *The Bhagvat-Gita*, 'Arjun-Vishada Yoga' as its name suggests, represents the dilemma and agony of Arjuna because he has to fight a battle with his own relatives- his uncles, cousins, grandfathers and other relatives. The psychological condition of Arjuna can be compared to that of any individual living in the modern era. All individuals on this Earth are fighting a battle within. In the words of Shri Shankaranand Swami, Vishada means "grief" which also means lamentation in itself: a "roga" or disease of the mind. But in *The Bhagvad-Gita,* in case of Arjuna, "roga" (disease) becomes "yoga"- a spiritual phenomenon-in other words- "empowermment". It is the grief of Arjuna and his cry for help and

Krishna's counsel to Arjuna that not only forms the basis of this sacred text but also makes *The Bhagavat-Gita* the most widely read, referred and researched text in the world providing spiritual and moral strength to the readers seeking for peace and answer to just any question or dilemma- trying to rise above any psychological problems. Since people in India are deeply rooted in spirituality, it becomes obvious that the need to avail the services of psychologists and psychiatrists becomes less pronounced.

The opening of *The Bhagvad-Gita,* the first chapter portrays a grief -stricken Arjuna, unable to muster the courage to fight against his own relations. Adhering to the classical literary convention, *The Mahabharata* begins *in medias res,* when both the armies of *Pandavas* and the *Kauravas* are positioned on the battlefield and we are at once introduced to Dhritarashtra- the blind king of the Kauravas. The battlefield resembles the distraught mind of an individual. In terms of psychoanalytical theory, according to Freud, the mind is a constant battlefield, which is caught between the Id, Ego and the Superego. Following Maslow's theory of Humanistic Psychology, the mind is constantly in conflict with the "real-self" and the "ideal-self". Analogous to the Gita's emphasis on "harmony within", with reference to Freud and Maslow, psychological agony arises from "inner disharmony". The character of Dhritarastra signifies his moral and spiritual blindness, akin to a modern man's inability to discern between the just and the unjust and also the ignorance of the blissful state that lies within.

The WHO has formulated ten Life-Skills in 1997, owing to rising mental health concerns like stress, anxiety, depression and various other challenges concerning the psychological well-being of individuals of all age groups in modern society. The study of life-skills has been an integral part of the curriculum in various educational frameworks such as UGC and CBSE. This research paper aims to examine the existence of indigenous knowledge within the Indian philosophical thought as a part of everyday practice among the indigenous society in the form of reciting and understanding the scriptures long before its formal inclusion in the contemporary education system categorized as "Life-Skills".

This study aims at exemplifying the notion that- the ten life-skills formulated by the WHO have always been fundamental to the Indian socio-cultural ethos through the teachings of *The Bhagavad Gita*- focusing on self- awareness and self -regulation - reducing the reliance on professional psychological services. Integrating the systematic analysis of the selected verses from the *Bhagavad Gītā*, with the contemporary model of "Life-Skills" and an interdisciplinary context drawn from psychology, philosophy and education, this study incorporates an analytical and comparative approach. Shlokas from the *Bhagavad Gītā* are selected and analysed to highlight the ten life-skills identified by the World Health Organisation and recent educational policies.

Self-Awareness.

Gita 6.5

उद्धरेदात्मनाऽत्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् ।
आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥

Uddhared ātmanā ātmānaṁ nātmānam avasādayet |
Ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ ||

This Shloka highlights the importance of being conscious of one's own-self which the modern psychology terms as "mindfulness". The meaning of the above shloka is that the importance of the word 'atman'- 'a conditioned soul' or an individual who is aware of one's strengths and weaknesses; observes one's own emotions-is underscored. The shloka means that an individual's victory or downfall solely depends on knowledge of the self.

Similarly, according to the WHO, the ability to recognise one's own character, strengths, weaknesses, emotions, values, and motivations is termed as "Self-awareness" which helps individuals understand and assess their own behaviour and performance and this trait becomes a guide for an individual's personal growth.

Empathy

Gita 6.32

आत्मौपम्येन सर्वत्र समं पश्यति योऽर्जुन ।
सुखं वा यदि वा दुःखं स योगी परमो मतः ॥

Ātmaupamyena sarvatra samaṁ paśyati yo 'rjuna |
Sukhaṁ vā yadi vā duḥkhaṁ sa yogī paramo mataḥ ||

This shloka, puts forth the ideas similar to the life-skill "empathy" which is described as the ability to perceive another person's perspective, to understand, feel and possibly share and respond to their experience. "Empathy" makes a person sensitive and sensible, contributing to healthy relationships. This shloka considers that "empathy" is a quality possessed by an ideal 'yogi' who considers the happiness and sorrow of others just like his own. A yogi is also aware of people's emotions around him because of his own experience. An empathetic person becomes a sincere friend of people. Thus, both the perspectives of the Bhagavat-Gita and Life-Skills on "empathy" agree on the idea that empathy is central to emotional well-being not just of an individual but of the society at large as well.

Effective Communication

Gita 17.15

अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत् ।
स्वाध्यायाभ्यसनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उच्यते ॥

Anudvegakaraṁ vākyaṁ satyaṁ priyahitaṁ ca yat |
Svādhyāyābhyasanaṁ caiva vāṅmayaṁ tapa ucyate |

The importance of "Effective Communication" is emphasised in the life-skills which involves speech and non-verbal communication- that is clear and appropriate to our culture and situations; while being sensitive to the perspectives of others. Life-skills precept presents effective communication as a psychosocial competence essential for healthy relationships leading to harmonious living. The above shloka, in the words of Swami Prabhupada, conveys that "austerity of speech consists in speaking words that are truthful, pleasing, beneficial and not agitating to others." As one communicates, it should be pleasurable to the ear which elevates the communication. Hence the importance of effective communication is highlighted in the above shloka.

Interpersonal Relationship Skills

Gita 12.15

यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः ।
हर्षामर्षभयोद्वेगैर्मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः ॥

Yasmān nodvijate loko lokān nodvijate ca yaḥ |
Harṣāmarṣa-bhayodvegair mukto yaḥ sa ca me priyaḥ ||

According to the precepts of Life-Skills, 'Interpersonal Relationship Skills' play an important role in maintaining positivity, managing situations effectively and live harmoniously with people around. Interpersonal Skills are considered as "people skills" that allow an individual to interact effectively with others and function well as a member of society. The above verse highlights the importance of emotional stability – freedom from agitation, resentment and fear during social interactions, which is an important aspect in building harmonious interpersonal relations.

Decision Making

Gita 18.30

प्रवृत्तिं च निवृत्तिं च कार्याकार्ये भयाभये ।
बन्धं मोक्षं च या वेत्ति बुद्धिः सा पार्थ सात्त्विकी ॥

Pravṛttiṁ ca nivṛttiṁ ca kāryākārye bhayābhaye |
Bandhaṁ mokṣaṁ ca yā vetti buddhiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī ||

"Decision-making" enables people to evaluate various options and make choices and then take appropriate action, keeping in mind the consequences that follow. This concept of life -skills is considered as a cognitive and psychosocial competence which is a necessary aspect of day-today life. It parallels the above shloka of the *Bhagvad-Gita* which is explained as Swami Prabhupada as "that understanding by which one knows what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, what is to be feared and what is not to be feared, what is binding and what is liberating, is the mode of goodness". This shloka highlights the importance of using the power of discretion – between action and inaction, right and wrong, fear and fearlessness and bondage and liberation.

Problem Solving

Gita 2.50

बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते ।
तस्माद्योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ॥

Buddhiyukto jahātīha ubhe sukṛta-duṣkṛte |
Tasmād yogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam ||

In Goleman's words, problem solving can be defined as- the ability to think clearly and act effectively in the face of challenges by managing one's emotions so that anxiety, anger or stress do not impair reasoning and judgment. It is the ability to understsnd the root cause of the problem, evaluate and select alternatives and find probable solutions to the problem. These skills also fall into the category of 'employability skills' enabling an individual with clariy, confidence and purposeful action.

The above verse from the *Bhagvad-Gita* corresponds to the explanation of 'problem-solving'. The shloka lays emphasis on the role of discriminative intelligence (buddhi) and states that a person capable of discernment rises above merit and demerit (*sukrta and duskrta*). This shloka also lays stress on dealing with challenges with a calm mind and strategic approach. Thus the importance of clarity of thought is highlighted in the Gita which is essential for problem resolution.

Critical Thinking

Gita 4.34

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥

Tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā |
Upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ ||

John Dewey considers Critical Thinking as "active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge." It is a perceptive life skill which is essential for assessing information before at a logical conclusion. The above verse directs the learner to seek the truth, develop a spirit of inquiry but this act of questioning should be combined with humility(*pranipata*) and engagement (*seva*) with a spiritual master. While the life-skills concept frames Critical Thinking as a cognitive life skill, the Gita presents it as a systematic intellectual practice that leads to insightful understanding.

Creative Thinking

Gita 10.41

यद्यद्विभूतिमत्सत्त्वं श्रीमदूर्जितमेव वा ।
तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोऽंशसम्भवम् ॥

Yad yad vibhūtimat sattvaṁ śrīmad ūrjitam eva vā |
Tat tad evāvagaccha tvaṁ mama tejo-'ṁśa-sambhavam ||

The life-skills framework defines critical thinking as the ability to objectively analyse information and assess value before forming judgments. Drawing a parallel between this definition and the above shloka, from a philosophical perspective stresses upon the importance of discerning deeper truths behind the seen reality. Superficial appearance has to be differentiated from actual value.

Coping with Stress
Gita 2.47

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

Karmaṇy evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana |
Mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stvakarmaṇi ||

People of all age groups experience stress due to the changing modern lifestyle and pressures associated withit. Coping with the stress can be challenging at times as it affects psychological and physiological well-being. The life-skills framework has attempted to create awareness of the ways to cope with the same in order to bring harmony in the life of an individual. The strategies of coping with stress include adopting healthy lifestyle, exercise, proper rest, meditation etc.

Stress particularly arises from expectations, fear and obsession with things. The above shloka provides a philosophical perspective that instructs the reader to practice "detachment" from the outcomes of our actions, which helps an individual in maintaining psychological balance. This concept of detachment emphasises on doing our duty religiously without expecting the results. This timeless shloka encourages emotional regulation among the readers. In the words of Swami Prabhupada, "You have the right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself the cause of the results of your activities and never be attached to not doing your duty". This timeless shloka promotes resilience mindset and coping mechanisms by compelling to reflect on our actions

Coping with Emotions
Gita 2.56

दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः ।
वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते ॥

Duḥkheṣv anudvigna-manāḥ sukheṣu vigata-spṛhaḥ |
Vīta-rāga-bhaya-krodhaḥ sthita-dhīr munir ucyate ||

Daniel Goleman considers 'Coping with Emotions' as a core component of emotional intelligence. An individual experiences various emotions in various situations- both positive and negative -which is natural but there arises a problem when the emotions are not regulated. Being conscious about one's emotions, delayed gratification, resilience and channelling the emotions constructively can make a huge difference in maintaining relationships and experiencing life itself.

The above shloka is explained in the words of Swami Prabhupada as- "One who is not disturbed in mind even amidst the threefold miseries or elated when there is happiness, and who is free from attachment, fear and anger, is called a sage of steady mind." This shloka presents emotional regulation as a mark of inner strength and stability.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it can be rightly said that the precepts put forth in life-skills proposed by WHO in the framework of education greatly resemble the ancient scriptures traditional Indian Knowledge System. Centuries before the arrival of contemporary theories of psychology, and the Life-Skills framework put forth by WHO, adopted by CBSE and NCERT, the Indian Knowledge System manifested itself through the scriptures – one of them being the *Bhagavad Gita*. Every shloka is rich in connotations lying emphasis on inner harmony and self-realization. Every individual who attempts to comprehend the the *Bhagavad Gita,* is bestowed with not seamless experience of spirituality but also develops into to a well-rounded personality. The timeless principles propounded in this scripture affirm not just personal well-being of an individual but also plays a vital role in shaping a socially conscious and cultured community to live in.

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Retelling History For Children: A Study of Recent Trends in Historiography And Representation

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Abstract:-

Recent changes in historiography have transformed how history is written and understood. Today, historians focus more on storytelling, emotions, and including different voices from the past. This approach is especially important for children's literature. This paper studies how new the retelling of history for children through stories trends in historiography influence. Instead of presenting history as a list of facts and events, modern historical writing uses stories that are engaging, emotional, and suitable for children. The study discusses subaltern, feminist, postcolonial, social, and narrative approaches to history and explains how they shape historical stories for young readers. The paper shows that storytelling helps children understand history better, develop empathy, and think critically, while also making history interesting and easy to understand.

Keywords: *Historiography, Children's Literature, Historical Narrative, Retelling History,Empathy, Narrative representation*

Introduction:

Children have innocent minds that readily captivate what they are taught and often accept ideas as they are presented. Traditionally, history has been introduced to children as a collection of dates, events, and heroic figures, often separated from lived experiences and emotions. Such an approach makes history appear distant and unengaging. To truly engage younger readers, it is essential to emphasize recent trends in historiography that focus on understanding, narrative

Building, and the inclusion of marginalized voices. When history is retold in this way, it transforms from a boring subject into one that is meaningful, applicable, and accessible to children. History is one of a series of discourses about the world. These discourses do not create the world (that physical stuff on which we apparently live) but they do suitable it and give it all the meanings it has. That bit of the world which is history's (ostensible) object of enquiry is the past. History as discourse is thus in a different category to that which it discourses about, that is, the past and history are different things. Additionally, the past and history are not stitched into each other such that only one historical reading of the past is absolutely necessary. The past and history float free of each other, they are ages and miles apart. For the same object of inquiry can be read differently by different discursive practices whilst, internal to each, there are different interpretive readings over time and space; as far as history is concerned historiography shows this. (Keith Jenkins's Re-thinking History Page no. 26, 27)

The past has already occurred. It is gone and cannot happen again. We can only know about it through the work of historians. Historians present the past in different forms such as books, articles, documentaries, and other writings. The past itself is gone, but history is what historians create when they study and explain it. History is the result of the hard work of historians (or people who work like historians). When historians encounter, they often ask each other what topic they are studying. This work appears in books and journals, which students read when they study history. When someone says, "I am going to university to read history," it means they will read these books and writings.

So, history exists on library shelves. If you study seventeenth-century Spain, you do not travel back in time or go to Spain itself. Instead, you go to the library and read books about it. In this sense, seventeenth-century Spain is found in books organized on shelves. You can also visit places like archives to find old records, but even there you still have to read documents. This reading is not natural or automatic; it is something you learn through education and training. Understanding history requires practice and guidance.

Objectives:

1. To examine recent trends in historiography relevant to children's historical narratives.
2. To analyze the role of narrative representation in retelling history for Children.
3. To explore how historiographical approaches influence the selection of themes, characters, and perspectives in children's historical literature.

Research Methodology

1. The study adopts a qualitative and analytical approach. It is based on:
2. A review of secondary sources related to recent historiographical trends.
3. Theoretical analysis of narrative history and children's literature.

Recent Trends in Historiography

Simple definition of historiography is the how history is written. Studies of which methods used, sources, interpretations of events and most important what is perspectives of historians

Recent trends in historiography focus on marginalized and troubled groups who were traditionally omitted from elite historical narratives. In children's literature, this approach permits the inclusion of ordinary people such as peasants, women workers, tribal communities, and children themselves. Such historical narratives help young readers understand history from multiple perspectives, rather than only from dominant or heroic viewpoints. For example, books written especially for children, like Subhadra Sen Gupta's A Flag, a Song and a Pinch of Salt: Freedom Fighters of India, present history in simple language with a clear chronological structure. Freedom fighters stood bravely against the powerful British Empire with only their courage and love for freedom. . Police sticks, prison, and even the fear of death could not stop them. You can recall the inspiring story of India's freedom struggle through the lives of great freedom fighters who carried the proudly flying tricolor toward the dream of a free India.

These books avoid overloading readers with dates and facts and instead highlight the struggles and contributions of common people in the freedom movement. This attitude can inspire children and reflects a new trend in historiography, which values not only great heroes but also recognizes the role of ordinary people in shaping history.

History books emphasize political events and all military conflicts between two parties. Blood shades, horror battlefield apart from those events many other incidents are also important in history. Children's minds are innocent; it can be connected easily to emotional events which they acquire in their daily life.

In Indian literature children literature play very crucial role. Recent historiography focuses on social and cultural aspects of the past events including daily life, relationship, love, and empathy when children read these books he automatically relate their life to those incidents. In new trends use story type narrations these stories about food habits, family life, schooling and play help children imagine in the past as a lived reality more than an abstract concept. children try to relate their life to historical events for example Subhadra sengupta's book'a clown for Tenali Rama', this book wrote for children, a book is very amazing there where two children basava and Sivakka are ordinary growing up in the village of Hampi in Karnataka. One day, Basava friends a pair of sculpting hammer and chisel, and as he starts carving with them, the magical instruments take them right back in time to the Hampi of the 16th century, ruled by the great Krishna deva Raya!

Here they make friends and are jumped into a world of scheming dancers, capable artists, powerful emperors who live in fabulous places and more. And when Basava becomes and appreciates sculpture, he is commissioned by the mythological Tenali Rama himself to create something in stone that will make him laugh!

Subhadra Sengupta is Indian children writer, she can make history come alive through this book. New trends of historiography try to focus these types of books for children. In historical narrative historians give importance to male characters. Women kept inside purposefully show only male dominant society but

feminist historiography highlights women's experience and contributes to it totally challenging male center historical narratives.

Retelling history for children is a new trend in children's literature. Children's writers show the importance of women characters through this lens, introducing strong female characters and emphasizing themes of resilience, attention, conflict and intervention.

These types of representations promote gender sensitivity and inclusion from an early age. Kavitha Mandana is an Indian children writer who wrote many books for children. One of them is the Teenage diary of abbakka the warrior queen of South India. This diary is the fictional diary of an unusual girl growing up during an exciting time. A girl who would go to any lengths and to protect and defend her Kingdom this book gives more importance to women character than man.

Postcolonial historiography critiques colonial interpretation of history and reclaim indigenous perspective. In literature, books have Eurocentric viewpoints, writers show colonial point of views through their books. Most of the books of European writers have shown British heroes, they have given minor character to colonized people. But in children's historical narratives, this trend helps dismantle Eurocentric viewpoints and presents history from the perspective of colonized society. It helps to encourage children to raise questions about dominance and recognize the complexity of power of British rulers.

One of the most significant current trends in historiography is the narrative or emotional turn, which recognizes storytelling as a real mode of historical understanding. Story telling is very useful for children. This approach emotions, memory, and personal experience. For children, narrative history transforms abstract events into engaging stories that arouse empathy and moral reflection.

Narrative Representation and Children's Understanding of History

Narrative representation Narrative representation means telling events, experiences, or ideas in the form of a story. It uses words, pictures, or other media to help people understand the meaning and order of events. It is not just storytelling, but a careful way of deciding who is shown, what happens, when it happens, and why it matters. This helps shape how people understand a topic and how they think or act. It is used in many fields like education, communication, and psychology. If we think about children's literature.

The fortunes of Narrative in the history of historical writing give us some insight into this question. Historians do not have to report their truths about the real world in narrative form. They may choose other, non-narrative, even ant narrative modes of representation, such as the meditation, the Anatomy, or the epitome. Tocqueville, Burckhardt, Huizinga, and Braudel, to mention only the most notable masters of modern his historiography, refused narrative in certain of their historiographical works, presumably on the assumption that the meaning of the events with which they wished to deal did not lend itself to representation in the narrative mode.3 They refused to tell a story about the past, or rather, they did not tell a story with well-marked beginning, middle, and end phases; they did not impose upon the processes that interested them the form that we normally associate with storytelling. While they Certainly narrated their accounts of the reality that they perceived, or thought they perceived, to exist within or behind the evidence they had examined, they did not narratives' that reality, did not impose upon it the form of a story. And their example permits us to distinguish Between a historical discourse that narrates and a discourse that narratives', between a discourses that openly adopts a perspective that looks out on the world and reports it and a discourse that feigns to make the world speak itself and speak itself as a story. The idea that narrative should be considered less as a form of representation than as a manner of speaking about events, whether real or imaginary, has been recently elaborated within a discussion of the relationship between discourse and narrative that has arisen in the wake of Structuralism and is associated with the work of Jakobson, Benveniste, Genette, Todorov, and Barthes. Here narrative is regarded as a manner of speaking characterized, as Genette expresses it, "by a certain number of exclusions and restrictive conditions" that the more "open" form of discourse does not impose upon the speaker.

Narrative representation is key to making history simple and accessible to children. Children like to tell stories. In Indian culture children listen to stories from their grandfather and grandmother. If history is

present in front of students generally they can be bored about the date and facts. So we should present historical events in a story telling method. Historical stories Provide structure of story in simple language present in very casually and meaning also very simplified of particular events.

There is no chance of complex construction and enabling younger readers to follow historical events through characters and plots. The writer uses a narrative method for presenting history. Children can relate past incidents to their own experience in day to day life and emotions that arise from empathy in their mind. Retelling history with the narration method it often focuses on individual lives, functioned characters or child heroes placed within historical contexts. This method relates with micro historical views and permits children to understand border historical processes through personal stories. Such types of narratives help to encourage imaginative engagement while sustaining historical authenticity.In the postmodern period many writers wrote books for children for example Sudha Murthy, Salman Rushdie, Subhadra sen Gupta Sengupta and Kavita Mandana.They wrote small books with simple language.

You just many images with colourful picture really it is a very amazing fall young leaders. Subhadra Sengupta was a postmortem children writer who has written books for children. Simplified it and use good pleasurable events through the sorry telling method. See written from ancient time history to Indian freedom history in a very simple way for example.

Ashoka the Great and compassionate king. This book was written by Subhadra Sengupta. The book is based on the life of King Asoka. The transformation that came over this king after one of his most significant victories at war made him a legend forever. Ashoka the Great, the ruler of ancient India's largest Kingdom, took the path of peace, addressed his subjects as a father would his children, and erected pillars that spread his thoughts throughout the land in the people's own language. He there welfare above all in and worked through towards that for the rest of his life. One of the most well-known symbols from India's history, the Ashok Chakra, now adorns India’s national flag, and the lion capital from his pillar is our national emblem.
In this lovely agro Singh account of Ashoka's life and time Subhadra Singh Gupta deathly brings him alive again from behind a swelling mist of time. It is a story about war, devotion and a king‘s love for his people, embellished with many details about Mauryan society.

Children's access to history is greatly aided by narrative depiction. Young readers can follow historical events through characters and narratives thanks to the structure, causality, and meaning that stories offer. Children can connect historical events to their own feelings and experiences when history is told as a narrative.

Individual lives, fictitious characters, or young protagonists set in historical settings are frequently the center of narrative retellings. Through personal narratives, this method helps kids comprehend more general historical processes and is consistent with micro historical techniques. While preserving historical reality, these stories also promote creative participation.

Retelling history for children through storytelling offers both learning and emotional advantages. From an enlightening standpoint, this type of method improves of children’s understanding, recollect, and enthusiasm for historical events. On an emotional level, it helps encourage empathy by permitting children to connect with characters from various eras and social contexts. This emotional connection aids in building moral awareness, social consciousness, and a more profound grasp of ideas like justice, inequality, and authorization.

Additionally, narrative history encourages critical thinking by showing that history can be expressed from multiple opinions. Children learn that historical narratives are built and open to interpretation, laying the foundation for informed and philosophical historical understanding.

Conclusion

Recent trends in historiography have distorted the ways in which history can be retelling for children. By highlighting narrative, inclusivity, feeling, and multiple viewpoints, contemporary historiography delivers a rich framework for creating engaging and meaningful historical narratives for young readers. Retelling history through stories not only makes the past available but also nurtures understanding,

imagination, and critical awareness. The study concludes that participating modern historiographical approaches into children's historical literature is essential for emerging historically informed, emotionally sensitive, and socially aware future citizens.

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Myths and Truths in Literature-Unveiling the Truths and Decoding the Realities
"The Salvation Trap-Based on Mathew Arnold's The Forsaken Merman"

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Abstract

Myths have dominated the realm of literature and poetry for centuries to tell stories that highlight ideas, beliefs and cultural practices of the time. Many mythological characters, like elves, nymphs, kings, queens, animals, mermaids, gods and goddess were used symbolically to express love, passion, generosity, kindness, vulnerability and cultural practices.

Apart from being stories used mostly for entertainment and history myths also provide reasons as to why things are the way they are. Myths, according to Jung provides symbols and narratives that are deeply ingrained in the fabric of a society's culture, often shared across generations without conscious awareness. They play a very integral part in legitimizing social norms and power structures by weaving myths around the origins of social institutions, religions and political systems and exiting hierarchies. ("The Power of Myths in Shaping Societies").

The current paper is about Mathew Arnold's poem "The Forsaken Merman" that uses the mythical character of the "Merman" (male counterpart of a mermaid) to expose the position of the Church during the Victorian era. In the poem Margaret abandons her husband the merman, her children and her sea home to go back to her human life on the day of Easter in order to save her soul from being damned because she married a pagan. The Merman and his children follow Margret to the land only to find that she cannot be dissuaded from her decision to continue to live her mortal life in the human world, leaving them to cope with betrayal, abandonment and sorrow.

Even though the poem is a retelling of the Danish folklore ballad "Agnes and the Merman" Mathew Arnold very beautifully uses the mythical character of the "Merman", the King of the Sea and his abandonment by his human wife for the salvation of her soul to expose the religious crisis of his time, his dislike for dogmatic puritan religious practices and the dominance of the church during the Victorian Era. The paper also highlights Mathew's belief that true religion, does not bring alienation but joy and freedom resulting in praiseworthy conduct. The paper also throws light on the fact that Margaret who sacrificed her family and life of beauty and freedom was really stuck in a salvation trap, she thought that she was getting salvation, but in reality, it was only a trap. On her return she was neither accepted as one of her kin nor she could ever forget the life she left behind. She was trapped and damned forever in the cycle of guilt although appearing to be outwardly happy. She proved from her actions that true religion, spirituality and salvation can only be achieved from pure acts of love and devotion, and displaying spiritual qualities in action rather than following dogmas and meaningless rituals of the church which were so exclusive and took her away from the things she loved.

***Key words**: dogmas, guilt, salvation, trap, control, alienation*

Introduction:

Myths have dominated the realm of literature and poetry for centuries to tell stories that highlight ideas, beliefs and cultural practices of the time. Many mythological characters, like elves, nymphs, kings, queens, animals, mermaids, gods and goddess were used symbolically to express love, passion, generosity, kindness, vulnerability and cultural practices.

Wikipedia on the other hand states that "the word myth comes from Ancient Greek word "mythos" meaning 'speech', 'narrative', or 'fiction'. In other words "myth" is a genre of folklore consisting primarily of narratives that play a fundamental role in a society." They are traditional stories that serve to explain the mysteries of the world, the origins of human life, and the forces of nature. **("The Power of Myths in Shaping Societies").**

Importance of Myths for society:

Apart from being stories used mostly for entertainment and history myths also provide reasons as to why things are the way they are. For example, Hindu mythological tales like the Ramayana and Mahabharata guide social behaviours and relationships, establishing roles and hierarchies whereas Abrahamic traditions about stories of creation from the Bible offer moral and ethical frameworks to its readers. Myths are thus vital in organizing and transmitting knowledge across generations and can be seen as the blueprints of society.

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During the 19th Century the Church was a predominant force of the Victorian Society that played a pivotal role in shaping moral standards and religious beliefs. It almost brainwashed individuals into believing that true religion is following all the dictates of the church even if that meant sacrificing everything else that was outlined as incorrect and immoral as dgination by the church which also included reason and intellectual thought.

The first two stanzas of the poem begin by painting a very sorrowful picture of a Merman dejected by the abandonment of his wife Margaret. The lines

"***children's voices should be dear,***
(Call once more) to a mother's ear;
children's voices, wild with pain—surely she will come again",

highlights the merman's belief that for a mother her children are most precious to her and that she would do anything to heed their call.

However, he is heartbroken to know that she is absolutely oblivious of even her children's pain leave alone the love of her husband. She chooses to sacrifice her motherly duties and best interest of her children for her blind devotion and allegiance to the church.

In the following lines of the very same stanza Mathew Arnold brings together two contrasting worlds, the sensual and romantic which has freedom and creativity in contrast to the mundane, and rigid practices of the church, rituals and restrain. The colourful world of the merman being described as having

"sand strewn caverns", "red gold throne", "kind sea waves", "pavement of pearl", "a ceiling of amber", "glistening waves" and "spent lights quiver and gleam" suggesting a mystical almost sacred atmosphere. While the human world is portrayed with words such as "the white wall'd town", "sandy town", "bounded land", "little grey church", all indicating control, suffocation and alienation.

The undersea world represents a vibrant, vital existence that is ultimately forsaken when Margaret returns to the "grey" church, symbolizing the loss of spiritual vitality in favour of a fading, restrictive faith. The contrast between the magical caverns and the 'little grey church' underscores Arnold's critique of contemporary religion as lifeless compared to the richness of a more communal, natural faith.

The fact the he mentions the sound of the church bell coming from afar, and the merman and his children climbing up the walls of the church and peering from the leaded window to hear the sound of long prayers from behind the shut doors, illustrates the exclusivity of religion, where half human monsters were not welcomed. They were beasts, pagans, who lived in a world full of sensuality and romance and were not capable of showing kind restrain, submission, self-control or devotion towards their creator.

It was believed by the Church of England that the "Bible-based Christian faith [was] a perfect, self-contained entity not subject to piecemeal amendment or selective acceptance" (Altick 207). They believed that the Bible was literally the "Word of God" and were deeply concerned with issues of church doctrine, liturgical practices and the ecclesiastical hierarchy **("Religion").** Anyone who didn't understand it's fundamental beliefs or practices and didn't live a life designed by the church as considered as outsiders and pagan. It is for the very same reason that Margaret was drawn to the sound of the bell on Easter and felt obliged to go back to the church in order to part of the prayers offered by her people. She seemed to display the misguided notion that salvation does not stem from carry out acts of sincerity and displaying human virtues instead it can be attained by simply following the dictates of the church without question the same.

Mathew Arnold also uses the two-world theory to talk about the ideologies of his age where with increased scientific discoveries, modern thought, rationalism and geological developments people began to question many of the prophies of the bible. Many even questioned the existence of God and turned to atheism, for freedom away from the suffocating and controlling society architected by the church while others decided to continue living in a world of empty rituals and namesake homage to the church and its practices devoid of any faith, stifled and boxed within confines of pure belief where religion was everything and intellect nothing.

Margaret belongs to the category of those who think that by following the ritualistic practices of the church they would attain salvation. Her kind of devotion is a replica of the kind of devotion that demanded attending church practices and religious instructions even outside the church, extending to family prayers, observances of Sunday as a day of rest and worship and adherence to a moral code informed by religious teachings outside its vicinity. **("Victorian Morality and Religion")**. Therefore, despite having the bounty of having children, a loving husband and a carefree magical life of the sea, she feels the guilt of not being able to join her kingsfolk for prayer and wants to join them in the church

"When down swung the sound of a far-off bell,
She sigh'd, she looked up through the clear green sea,
She said; I must go, for my kinsfolk pray, in the little grey church on the shore to-day,
Twill be Easter-time in the world-ah me!
And I lose my poor soul, Merman! Here with thee".

Carl Jung described the church as a powerful collective authority over human psyche. By providing fixed doctrines, rituals and moral codes, the Church shaped people's beliefs and behaviours from childhood. While this offered psychological security, it often discouraged individual spiritual experience. Hence for Margaret Easter is a significant day because it's when Christ came alive and was resurrected from the dead. She believes that by attending the church practice she will prevent her soul from going to hell as she married a pagan.

Towards the preceding stanzas the of the poem the merman willing lets his wife go hoping that she will return which she never does. Following which his children and him climb to the sandy town where and

peer through the clear window panes of the church and her the prayers of the priest behind closed doors. They call out to their mother in vain and all they see is Maragaret whose head is bent over the bible praying. It is obvious that she has chosen her love and duty towards Christianity over her love and duty towards her children and husband.

As Mathew Arnold writes in the poem

"Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here!
dear heart," I said, "we are long alone; the sea grows stormy, the little ones moan."
But, ah, she gave me never a look, for her eyes were seal'd to the holy book! Lo
ud prays the priest; shut stands the door.
Come away, children, call no more"!

Towards the end of the poem Margaret is seen sitting at her wheel and singing her heart out. For a while she seems happy with her decision and then she looks out at the sand and the sea and begins to cry on remembering her little children, her Mathew Arnold describes her inner struggle which humanizes her. Her struggle between her love for God and salvation which she thinks can only be fulfilled by following the norms of the church and her love for freedom and her family. Lamenting with the fall of an occasional tear for a world which she can no longer call home.

'And her eyes are set in a stare;
And anon there breaks a sigh,
And anon there drops a tear,
From a sorrow-clouded eye,
And a heart sorrow-laden,
A long, long sigh,
For the cold strange eyes of a little Mermaiden,
And the gleam of her golden hair.' (p.82)

The poem ends with the Merman taking the children back to their sea home and imagining his alienated wife an telling his children that they will always remember that they have a loved one on the shore, who was cruel to leave her family for the what she understood as spirituality.

At the end of the poem Margaret appears to be doubting her decision of returning back to the land. She realizes that the world she returned was in-fact an exclusive world where as described by Carl Jung individuals were deprived from the true meaning of a spiritual experience. The community and the empty rituals of the church were actually more of a myth than the merman himself or his world and practices. Moreover, even though she came back she was only a misfit, following robotically the rituals of the church but carrying in her heart the guilt of abandoning her family and a loving husband who willingly let her go.

Fulweiler in his work **"On Arnold's Forsaken Merman"** argues that for Margaret 'Easter is not a symbolic resurrection from death to life; it is, as she implies to the merman, only a legal observance to save herself'. Hence this most joyous Christian holiday symbolises her ironic failure to accept real life: 'She is reborn, not into life, but into spiritual death.' Moreover, Fulweiler concludes that 'Through exquisite irony Arnold shows that her choice of conventional morality and her timorous rejection of the depths of being cause her to commit the most shocking immorality, the Judas sin – treachery.'

Margaret became part of a salvation trap where she only became part of a dogmatic world of rituals, instead of achieving real salvation which comes from a moral conduct and display of spiritual qualities. She was following a faith that was devoid of action unable quiet opposite to Mathew Arnolds understanding of religion quoted in his book "**Literature and Dogma"** where he described religion as 'morality touched by emotion' and God as 'the enduring power … which makes for righteousness' **(as cited in Machann 112**). He also stated that Christianity, with greater sweetness and reason, leads to right conduct, and the right conduct leads to joy (**Machann 112**).

In reality it was the Merman who achieved true salvation despite being a monster and a pagan. He displayed qualities of love, selflessness and trust. Despite his wife forsaking him he even forgave the unfaithful human

Over banks of bright seaweed
The ebb-tide leaves dry.
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,
At the white, sleeping town;
At the church on the hill-side—
And then come back down.
Singing: "There dwells a loved one,
But cruel is she!
She left lonely for ever
The kings of the sea."

He also showed the quality of a good father who didn't abandon his children, had the courage to leave his world and climb up to the "little grey church" in order to call out to his wife who chose to ignore them for her call of duty to the church. Margaret tried to achieve salvation by simply paying lip service to the tenets of Christianity and carrying out acts of devotion without showing it in her actions. The merman on the other hand may not have been a human but the so-called monster had more capacity to be human, to demonstrate the attributes of God, to really live the life of a true Christian. He was trusting enough to let his wife go to the church, he knew how important it was for her.

I said: "Go up, dear heart, through the waves;
Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves!"

However, she was cruel and never really considered his lament and the plight of his children. She was selfish and her own salvation, her own wanting to be part of something that she had known from childhood was more important than her family and the free life of the sea.

His life of the sea was all inclusive, including different types of creatures that live in perfect harmony with each other, quite unlike the world of humans that was walled and included only those who don't dare to question and like sheep follow the dictates of a selected few and do things for the sake of doing without feeling and true spirit of faith.

Conclusion:

In the broader perspective of things using the mythical creature of the merman and contrasting his world with the human world, using Margaret as the caricature of a Christian following the dogmas of their church and then alienating themselves from everything that is human and natural for it and then finding out whatever they had believed had actually been only a myth a salvation trap, Arnold really presents through his poem the predicament of his times. The poem is a reflection of his and many other people of intellects feelings about being alienated from a faith that they had believed in for so long but now were only meaningless rituals under the strict control of the church, uniform, constricted and absolutely lifeless.

It also encourages its readers to really ponder on the fact of what is true salvation, deeds or only empty words and fake obedience. Is it necessary to sacrifice everything that is normal sensible and a natural instinct for the same of a few people who profess to understand true Christianity. Is alienating ourselves from everything that we love and are responsible praiseworthy in the sight. Is this really salvation or is it only a trap.

"O Children of Adam! Holy words and pure and goodly deeds ascend unto the heaven of celestial glory", (Bahá'í Reference Library - the Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh, Page 46") is what the Merman being half human and half fish displayed, he was freed from the salvation trap by virtue of living the life of a true believer without even being aware of the same. While Margaret who identified herself all her life with the closed community of the ritual and its dogmatic practices, was stuck in the trap forever by abandoning her children, deceiving the trust of her husband and choosing her so called love of her understanding of God and religion over her moral responsibility of being a mother, wife and human.

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Myth of Social Harmony vs. Reality of Caste Conflict in Indian Literature

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Abstract

Indian society has often been represented through the idealized notion of social harmony, unity, and cultural coexistence. However, beneath this surface lies a persistent and deeply entrenched reality of caste-based inequality, exclusion, and conflict. Indian literature, particularly from the late colonial period to the contemporary era, has played a crucial role in exposing the contradiction between the myth of social harmony and the lived reality of caste oppression. This research paper adopts a sociological perspective to examine how Indian literature interrogates the ideological construction of social harmony while simultaneously revealing caste conflict as a structural feature of society. Through an analysis of selected literary texts, including novels, autobiographies, poetry, and critical writings, the study highlights how literature becomes a site of resistance, social critique, and assertion of marginalized identities. The paper argues that Indian literature not only reflects caste conflict but also contributes to the discourse of social justice by challenging hegemonic narratives and advocating egalitarian social transformation.

Keywords

Social harmony, caste conflict, Indian literature, sociological perspective, marginalization, social justice

Introduction

The idea of social harmony has been a dominant narrative in the representation of Indian society. Rooted in notions of cultural pluralism, spiritual unity, and civilizational continuity, this narrative often conceals the harsh realities of caste hierarchy and social exclusion. Sociologically, caste is not merely a cultural institution but a structural system that regulates power, privilege, and access to resources. Indian literature has historically oscillated between reinforcing the myth of harmony and exposing the conflicts embedded within caste relations.

From classical texts to modern literary forms, dominant representations frequently emphasized social order and moral consensus. However, with the rise of anti-caste movements and democratic consciousness, literature began to articulate voices from the margins. Dalit literature, progressive writing, and feminist narratives critically dismantle the romanticized image of harmonious society. In this context, Indian literature serves as a critical archive of social conflict, revealing how caste-based oppression contradicts claims of unity and cohesion.

This paper seeks to examine Indian literature as a sociological text that captures the tension between ideological harmony and social conflict. It situates literary production within broader socio-historical processes and highlights literature's role in questioning caste domination.

Objectives

1. To examine the sociological meaning of social harmony in the Indian context.
2. To analyse caste conflict as represented in Indian literary texts.
3. To explore how literature challenges the ideological myth of caste harmony.
4. To understand the role of marginalized voices in reshaping literary discourse.

Review of Literature

Scholarly engagement with caste and literature has expanded significantly in recent decades. Louis Dumont viewed caste as an ideological system based on hierarchy, often rationalized through religious

consensus. In contrast, B.R. Ambedkar emphasized caste as a system of graded inequality sustained by power and exclusion. Literary critics such as Gail Omvedt and Kancha Ilaiah argue that literature emerging from marginalized communities exposes the violence underlying caste order.

Indian literary criticism has also examined how canonical texts often normalize caste relations, while modern and contemporary writings disrupt such narratives. Studies on Dalit autobiographies highlight literature as a form of social testimony and resistance. Feminist scholars emphasize the intersection of caste and gender, revealing multiple layers of oppression. This body of literature provides a foundation for analysing caste conflict as a central theme in Indian literary production.

Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in sociological theories of conflict and power. Marxist theory provides insight into structural inequality and domination, while Weber's theory of social stratification explains status-based exclusion. Ambedkarite theory forms the core framework, emphasizing annihilation of caste as a prerequisite for social justice. Additionally, Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony is used to understand how the myth of social harmony functions ideologically to sustain caste dominance. These perspectives enable a critical reading of literature as a social practice embedded in relations of power.

Research Methodology

The research adopts a qualitative and interpretive methodology. Secondary sources form the primary data, including novels, autobiographies, poems, essays, and literary criticism. Textual analysis is employed to examine themes, narratives, and representations related to caste and social conflict. A sociological lens is used to interpret literary texts as reflections of social structures and lived experiences rather than isolated aesthetic artifacts.

Analysis

1. Caste Harmony as an Ideological Construction in Indian Literature

Indian literature has historically projected Indian society as morally unified and socially harmonious, particularly in canonical and nationalist writings. This representation often normalizes caste hierarchy by presenting it as functional and culturally accepted. From a sociological perspective, such harmony is ideological rather than real, as it suppresses conflict and inequality. Texts that avoid questioning caste reproduce dominant social values. Literature thus becomes a tool for legitimizing social order rather than challenging it. This ideological harmony conceals structural violence embedded in caste relations.

2. Dalit Autobiography as a Counter-Narrative to Social Harmony

Dalit autobiographies such as Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan* directly confront the myth of harmonious coexistence. These texts document everyday humiliation, exclusion, and violence faced by Dalits. By foregrounding lived experience, they expose caste conflict as routine and systemic. Sociologically, these narratives function as testimonies against dominant cultural silence. They replace abstract harmony with concrete social reality. Literature here becomes an instrument of resistance and assertion of dignity.

3. The Village as a Symbolic Space of Caste Conflict

Indian villages are often idealized in literature as cohesive and cooperative communities. However, realist and Dalit writings depict villages as spaces of rigid segregation and power imbalance. Works by writers like Premchand reveal how caste determines access to land, labor, and respect. Sociologically, the village represents micro-level caste conflict. Literature unmasks the contradiction between romantic imagery and social oppression. Harmony exists only for dominant castes, not for the marginalized.

4. Gendered Dimensions of Caste Conflict in Literature

Indian literature increasingly highlights how caste oppression is intensified by gender. Dalit women's narratives reveal dual exploitation based on caste and patriarchy. Texts such as Bama's *Karukku* show how social harmony excludes Dalit women altogether. Sociologically, this intersectionality exposes layered conflict. Literature challenges the idea that caste oppression is gender-neutral. It broadens the understanding of social injustice within caste society.

5. Religion as a Moral Justification of Caste Hierarchy

Many literary texts critique the role of religion in sustaining caste inequality. Religious symbolism is often used to naturalize hierarchy and discourage resistance. Sociologically, religion becomes an ideological apparatus reinforcing social harmony myths. Writers influenced by Ambedkar expose contradictions between spiritual ideals and social practice. Literature questions moral authority and ritual purity. In doing so, it reveals caste conflict hidden beneath religious rhetoric.

6. Education as a Site of Conflict and Social Mobility

Literature frequently portrays education as a transformative force for marginalized communities. Dalit narratives describe educational spaces as sites of discrimination as well as resistance. Access to education disrupts inherited caste roles and challenges-imposed harmony. Sociologically, education becomes a means of class mobility and consciousness. Literary examples show how learning generates conflict with traditional authority. Thus, education undermines caste-based social order.

7. Urban Spaces and the Reproduction of Caste Conflict

Urbanization is often assumed to weaken caste structures. However, Indian literature demonstrates that caste adapts to modern contexts. Urban narratives reveal discrimination in housing, employment, and social networks. Sociologically, caste shifts from ritual to institutional forms. Literature exposes new patterns of exclusion behind the façade of modern harmony. Urban spaces thus reproduce, rather than erase, caste conflict.

8. Language, Silence, and the Politics of Representation

Dominant literary language historically excluded marginalized voices. Dalit literature challenges this by asserting new linguistic forms and narratives. Silence in mainstream texts reflects power relations within society. Sociologically, control over language is control over representation. Literature becomes a site where symbolic power is contested. Breaking silence exposes caste conflict embedded in cultural production.

9. Literature as Social Critique and Ethical Intervention

Indian literature functions as a moral critique of society by questioning inequality and injustice. Progressive and anti-caste writers use fiction and poetry to expose exploitation. Sociologically, literature acts as a form of social intervention. It challenges readers to confront uncomfortable realities. By rejecting false harmony, literature demands ethical accountability. This transforms literary activity into social praxis.

10. Towards a Literature of Social Justice and Equality

Contemporary Indian literature increasingly aligns with movements for social justice. Writers consciously reject narratives of harmony that ignore oppression. Instead, they foreground equality, dignity, and human rights. Sociologically, literature becomes part of democratic struggle. It imagines alternative social relations beyond caste hierarchy. Thus, Indian literature contributes to rethinking society itself.

Findings

The findings of the study indicate that Indian literature consistently challenges the widely propagated myth of social harmony by revealing caste conflict as a lived and structural reality. Literary texts function as sociological evidence, showing how caste hierarchies shape everyday life, access to resources, and social dignity. Dalit autobiographies foreground experiential truth and expose systemic discrimination that dominant narratives attempt to normalize or silence. Women's writings further reveal the intersection of caste and gender, highlighting multiple layers of oppression. Adivasi literature uncovers displacement, cultural erosion, and marginalization under the guise of development. Overall, the findings establish that Indian literature not only reflects caste conflict but actively critiques and resists structures of inequality, thereby contributing to the discourse of social justice.

Suggestions

The study suggests that literary criticism should adopt a stronger sociological orientation to understand caste as a historical and structural phenomenon rather than a cultural anomaly. Academic curricula must meaningfully include Dalit, Adivasi, and marginalized women's writings to ensure

representational and epistemic justice. Interdisciplinary research combining sociology, history, and literature should be encouraged to deepen analytical rigor. Translation and wider circulation of marginalized voices are necessary to democratize literary knowledge. Academic conferences and publishing platforms should prioritize literature that engages with social justice, inequality, and resistance, enabling literature to function as a critical instrument of democratic consciousness.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that Indian literature powerfully dismantles the myth of social harmony by foregrounding caste conflict as a lived and persistent reality. Through realist, progressive, and resistance-oriented writings, authors expose the ideological mechanisms that normalize inequality while masking it as cultural unity. The sociological reading of literary texts demonstrates that caste is not merely a social residue of the past but an active force shaping contemporary experiences. Literature thus becomes a critical space for articulating dissent, recovering suppressed histories, and imagining alternative futures grounded in social justice. Rather than celebrating harmony, meaningful literary engagement demands confronting conflict as a prerequisite for democratic transformation and social equality.

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From Auspiciousness to Absence: Myths of Ornaments, Women's Health, and Patriarchal Control

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Abstract

This paper examines the cultural myths associated with female ornaments in Indian society and their role in reinforcing patriarchal control over women's bodies and identities. Traditionally, ornaments such as mangalsutra, bangles, sindoor, toe rings, and nose rings are regarded as symbols of marriage, prosperity, and feminine virtue. Popular beliefs also claim that these ornaments contribute to women's physical well-being by regulating hormones and improving health. As a result, their use is socially encouraged for married women. However, these same ornaments are denied to women after widowhood, revealing a striking contradiction within cultural practices. Once considered auspicious and beneficial, ornaments suddenly become inappropriate, and widows are expected to abandon them along with other forms of self-expression and beauty. This shift reflects the conditional nature of societal concern for women's health and happiness, which is largely dependent on their marital status.

Drawing on feminist theory and Roland Barthes' concept of myth, this study analyses how such beliefs are socially constructed and presented as natural and unquestionable. It also engages with Michel Foucault's ideas on power and discipline to explain how women's bodies are regulated through cultural norms. The paper argues that these practices function as mechanisms of patriarchal control that reduce women's value to their relationship with men. By critically examining the symbolic and ideological significance of female ornaments, this research highlights the need to challenge discriminatory traditions and promote a more inclusive understanding of women's identity, autonomy, and well-being in contemporary Indian society.

Keyword *Patriarchy, Female Ornaments, Cultural Myths, Widowhood, Women's Health, Feminism*

Introduction:

In Indian society, female ornaments are not merely objects of decoration but are deeply embedded with cultural, social, and symbolic meanings. Jewellery such as mangalsutra, bangles, sindoor, toe rings, and nose rings traditionally signify marriage, prosperity, and feminine virtue. These ornaments function as visible markers of a woman's marital status and are closely associated with ideas of respectability and social acceptance. Over time, they have become important tools through which society defines and regulates women's identities. Alongside their symbolic value, ornaments are often linked to popular beliefs about women's health and well-being. It is commonly claimed that bangles improve blood circulation, toe rings regulate reproductive health, and nose rings assist in maintaining hormonal balance. These notions are frequently presented as scientific or traditional wisdom and are used to justify the compulsory wearing of ornaments by married women. As a result, the practice appears natural, beneficial, and unquestionable.

However, these beliefs undergo a significant transformation in the context of widowhood. When a woman loses her husband, the same ornaments that were once considered auspicious and essential are suddenly regarded as inappropriate. Widows are often expected to remove their jewellery, abandon colourful clothing, and adopt a restrained lifestyle. This social shift reflects a deeper ideological structure in which a woman's body, beauty, and health are valued primarily in relation to her husband's presence.

This paper argues that such practices are not neutral cultural traditions but are shaped by patriarchal myths that seek to control female bodies and emotions. The concern for women's health and happiness remains conditional, operating mainly within the institution of marriage. By drawing on feminist theory and the concept of myth, this study critically examines how ornaments become instruments of social discipline and symbolic regulation. Through this analysis, the paper aims to highlight the need to question discriminatory customs and to promote a more equitable understanding of women's identity and autonomy in contemporary Indian society.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in feminist theory, which examines the ways in which patriarchal structures shape women's lives, bodies, and identities. Feminist scholars argue that social institutions, cultural practices, and traditional beliefs often function to maintain male dominance and restrict female autonomy. Simone de Beauvoir's concept of woman as "the Other" explains how women are historically positioned as secondary and dependent on men. In the context of ornaments, women's identities are constructed mainly in relation to their husbands, reinforcing the idea that their social value lies in marriage.

In addition to feminist theory, this paper draws upon Roland Barthes' concept of myth as discussed in *Mythologies*. According to Barthes, myths are socially constructed meanings that are presented as natural and universal truths. Cultural practices become myths when their ideological nature is hidden and they are accepted without question. Beliefs regarding the auspiciousness and health benefits of female ornaments function as such myths. They transform socially imposed norms into seemingly logical and beneficial traditions, thereby legitimizing patriarchal control.

Furthermore, Michel Foucault's ideas on power, discipline, and the regulation of bodies provide an important framework for understanding how women's appearance and behaviour are controlled. Foucault argues that modern societies exercise power not only through laws but also through subtle practices that discipline individuals. The regulation of women's clothing, ornaments, and lifestyle, especially in widowhood, reflects this form of disciplinary power. Through social expectations and moral judgments, women are encouraged to conform to restrictive norms.

Together, these theoretical perspectives help in analysing how myths surrounding female ornaments operate within patriarchal systems. Feminist theory highlights gender inequality, Barthes' myth theory reveals ideological constructions, and Foucault's concept of power explains mechanisms of control. By integrating these frameworks, the paper provides a comprehensive understanding of how cultural traditions shape women's health, identity, and social status in Indian society.

Review of Literature

Scholarly studies on gender, culture, and patriarchy have consistently highlighted the role of social practices in shaping women's identities. Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, argues that women are socially constructed as subordinate to men and are defined primarily through their relationships with them. Her analysis provides a foundational understanding of how marriage and widowhood become central to women's social existence. This perspective is useful in examining how ornaments function as markers of marital status and feminine virtue.

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity emphasizes that gender is not a fixed identity but is repeatedly produced through social actions and cultural symbols. According to Butler, practices such as dressing, adornment, and bodily presentation contribute to the performance of femininity. In the Indian context, the compulsory wearing of ornaments by married women can be seen as a form of gender performance that reinforces traditional expectations of womanhood.

Roland Barthes, in *Mythologies*, explains how everyday cultural objects and practices acquire ideological meanings through myth. He argues that myths transform historical and social constructs into naturalized truths. Several cultural studies scholars have applied Barthes' framework to analyse traditions related to dress, rituals, and symbols. These studies reveal how ornaments are imbued with meanings of purity, fortune, and morality, thereby legitimizing gendered hierarchies.

Research on widowhood in India has also provided important insights into the marginalization of widows. Scholars such as Veena Das and Martha Chen have examined how widows are subjected to social isolation, economic vulnerability, and emotional neglect. Their work highlights how cultural norms restrict widows' participation in social life and limit their access to resources and dignity. Studies by Uma Chakravarti further demonstrate how widowhood practices are linked to caste, class, and patriarchal ideology.

Feminist scholars in the Indian context, including Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Sharmila Rege, have critically analysed how global and local patriarchies intersect to regulate women's lives. Mohanty emphasizes the importance of understanding women's experiences within specific cultural and historical contexts, while Rege highlights the role of social structures in shaping gender inequalities. Their work supports the need to analyse ornament-related practices as part of broader systems of power.

Although existing literature has extensively discussed gender roles, marriage, and widowhood, limited attention has been paid to the connection between female ornaments, health-related myths, and patriarchal control. Most studies focus either on symbolic meanings or social discrimination, without critically examining how health narratives are used to justify restrictive practices. This gap highlights the need for the present study, which seeks to integrate cultural symbolism, bodily regulation, and feminist critique in the analysis of female ornaments.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretative research approach to analyse the cultural myths surrounding female ornaments, women's health, and patriarchal control in Indian society. Since the research focuses on social meanings, beliefs, and symbolic practices, a qualitative method is considered most appropriate. The study aims to understand how traditions and myths are constructed, maintained, and internalized within social contexts. The primary method used in this research is textual and discourse analysis. Selected literary texts, films, cultural narratives, and sociological writings related to marriage, widowhood, and female adornment are critically examined. These sources are analysed to identify recurring themes, symbols, and ideological patterns associated with women's ornaments and health-related beliefs. This method helps in understanding how cultural meanings are represented and reinforced through various forms of expression.

In addition to textual analysis, the study also draws upon secondary sources such as books, journal articles, research papers, and reports related to gender studies, feminist theory, cultural studies, and Indian social practices. These sources provide theoretical support and contextual background for the analysis. Relevant feminist and sociological literature is reviewed to situate the study within existing academic debates. The research also incorporates observational insights based on everyday social practices and cultural experiences in urban and semi-urban regions of India. Informal observations of rituals, family traditions, and community norms related to women's ornaments and widowhood contribute to the understanding of lived realities. These observations are used cautiously and ethically, without identifying individuals, and are employed only to support broader theoretical arguments.

The collected data is analysed thematically using feminist and mythological frameworks. Patterns related to marriage, health beliefs, widowhood restrictions, and gendered power relations are identified and interpreted. This analytical process enables the study to reveal how cultural practices function as mechanisms of social control. By combining textual analysis, secondary research, and observational insights, this methodology ensures a comprehensive and critical examination of the subject. It allows the study to explore both symbolic representations and everyday practices, thereby strengthening the validity and relevance of the research findings.

Analysis and Discussion

1. Ornaments as Symbols of Auspiciousness and Marital Identity

In Indian society, female ornaments function as powerful symbols of marital status and social respectability. Items such as mangalsutra, bangles, sindoor, and toe rings are widely regarded as markers of a woman's "saubhagya" (good fortune). These ornaments publicly announce a woman's association

with her husband and her acceptance within the social structure. Through daily rituals and social expectations, women are encouraged to internalize the belief that wearing these symbols is essential for their dignity and identity. Marriage transforms ornaments into compulsory signs of virtue and devotion. A woman who does not conform to these norms is often subjected to social criticism and moral judgment. This indicates that ornaments are not merely personal choices but socially regulated practices that discipline female behaviour.

2. Health Myths and the Justification of Control

Traditional narratives frequently claim that female ornaments have scientific and medical benefits. Bangles are believed to improve blood circulation, toe rings to regulate reproductive health, and nose rings to maintain hormonal balance. These claims are commonly circulated through family traditions, popular media, and cultural discourse. By presenting these practices as beneficial for health, society legitimizes their enforcement on women. However, these health-related narratives often lack empirical scientific evidence and function primarily as ideological tools. They mask patriarchal control under the guise of care and concern. Women are made to believe that obedience to these customs is necessary for their physical well-being, thereby discouraging resistance. This process reflects what Barthes describes as myth-making, where socially constructed meanings are naturalized and presented as universal truths. The idea that ornaments are essential for women's health becomes a myth that supports gender hierarchy.

3. Widowhood and the Politics of Absence

The transition from marriage to widowhood marks a dramatic shift in a woman's social identity. Once considered auspicious, she is suddenly viewed as inauspicious. The removal of ornaments becomes a ritualized expression of loss and social exclusion. Widows are often expected to abandon jewellery, colourful clothing, and festive participation, symbolizing their withdrawal from public life. This denial of adornment reflects the broader marginalization of widows. Their bodies become sites of social regulation, where visibility, beauty, and self-expression are restricted. The absence of ornaments represents not only personal grief but also institutionalized neglect imposed by patriarchal norms.

4. Conditional Concern for Women's Health

One of the most striking contradictions in these practices lies in the conditional nature of concern for women's health. While married women are encouraged to wear ornaments for their supposed medical benefits, widows are denied the same "protective" practices. This reveals that concern for women's well-being is closely linked to their reproductive and marital roles. Patriarchal society prioritizes women's health primarily in relation to their function as wives and potential mothers. Once this function is disrupted by widowhood, the woman's physical and emotional needs lose social importance. This reflects a utilitarian view of women's bodies, where care is extended only when it serves male-centered interests.

5. Power, Discipline, and Social Surveillance

Drawing on Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, the regulation of women's adornment can be understood as a form of social surveillance. Families, neighbours, and community members collectively monitor women's behaviour and appearance. Deviations from accepted norms are often met with criticism, gossip, or social exclusion. This constant observation encourages self-regulation among women. Many internalize these norms and voluntarily conform to restrictive practices, fearing social disapproval. As a result, patriarchal control operates not only through external force but also through psychological conditioning.

6. Representation in Literature and Popular Culture

Literature and cinema have played a significant role in reinforcing and questioning these cultural norms. Many Indian novels, short stories, and films depict widows as silent, self-sacrificing figures who renounce personal desires. Films such as *Water* and literary works like *Pinjar* portray the emotional and social suffering of widowed women within traditional settings. At the same time, contemporary writers and filmmakers have begun to challenge these stereotypes by presenting widows as

independent and assertive individuals. Such representations contribute to the gradual transformation of social attitudes and encourage critical reflection on discriminatory practices.

7. Resistance and Changing Perspectives

Despite the persistence of traditional norms, many women today are questioning and resisting restrictive practices. Urbanization, education, economic independence, and feminist activism have enabled women to redefine cultural meanings. Increasingly, widows are choosing to wear ornaments, participate in social life, and assert their right to self-expression. These changes indicate a slow but significant shift towards greater autonomy. However, resistance often remains limited by social pressures and internalized guilt. Therefore, structural change requires not only individual courage but also collective transformation of cultural values.

Conclusion

This study has examined the cultural myths surrounding female ornaments and their role in reinforcing patriarchal control over women's bodies, identities, and well-being in Indian society. Ornaments such as mangalsutra, bangles, sindoor, and toe rings, which are traditionally regarded as symbols of auspiciousness and health, function as powerful social markers that regulate women's lives within the institution of marriage. While these practices are presented as expressions of care and tradition, they often serve as mechanisms of discipline and conformity. The analysis reveals a deep contradiction in societal attitudes toward women's health and happiness. Married women are encouraged to wear ornaments for their supposed physical and emotional benefits, whereas widows are denied the same practices. This conditional concern exposes how patriarchal structures value women primarily in relation to their husbands. Once this relationship is disrupted, women's needs and identities are marginalized, reflecting a broader culture of exclusion and neglect.

By applying feminist theory, Barthes' concept of myth, and Foucault's notion of power, the paper has demonstrated how cultural beliefs are constructed, normalized, and sustained through everyday practices. These myths transform socially imposed restrictions into accepted traditions, thereby concealing their ideological nature. As a result, women often internalize these norms and participate in their own regulation. At the same time, the study highlights emerging forms of resistance and transformation. Education, economic independence, and increased awareness of gender equality have enabled many women to challenge discriminatory customs and reclaim their autonomy. Contemporary literature, cinema, and social movements have also contributed to questioning traditional narratives and promoting alternative representations of womanhood.

In conclusion, the paper emphasizes the need to critically re-examine cultural practices that limit women's freedom in the name of tradition and health. True respect for women's well-being must extend beyond marital status and recognize their inherent dignity as individuals. By dismantling patriarchal myths and promoting inclusive social values, Indian society can move toward a more just and equitable future for all women.

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Haunted Highways and Ancient Curses: Mythic Horror in 7 Hours at Bhata Road

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Abstract:

This paper explores **7 Hours at Bhata Road** *(2020) by* ***Ajinkya Bhasme*** *as a distinctive example of mythic horror in contemporary Indian literature, where ancient prophecy, folklore, and supernatural dread intersect with modern narrative form, as well as how ancient folklore has been utilized as a tool to generate modern-day horror. Set against the backdrop of a rural highway cursed by an occult ritual, the novella reimagines mythic structures through the* haunted road *motif—a space where terror manifests according to a centuries-old prophecy that foretells the birth of hell and the reign of a demonic force. By analyzing how the narrative draws on folk beliefs, occult prophecy, and rural myth to generate horror, this study examines the text in the light of myth criticism and psychoanalytical theory. The curse's operational parameters—men dying, women going blind, and children drowning during the seven nocturnal hours—serve as symbolic markers of social anxieties about fate, ritual transgression, and the boundary between the sacred and the profane. Through close reading of character experiences and mythic references, the paper argues that Bhasme's work contributes to an evolving corpus of Indian horror where* mythic horror *is not merely a stylistic device but a medium to explore collective memory, fear of the unknown, and the persistence of folklore in contemporary consciousness.*

(Keywords: *mythic horror, folklore, haunted roads, old prophecy, occult horror)*

Background and Significance of Indian Mythological Horror

Indian mythological horror occupies a distinct cultural space in the broader genre of horror storytelling. Unlike many Western horror traditions that rely heavily on Gothic tropes or invented monsters, Indian horror draws extensively from indigenous folklore, regional legends, and ancient mythic beings such as bhoots (ghosts), chudails (female spirits), vetālas (possession entities), and rakshasas (demonic figures) embedded in Hindu mythological and local belief systems. These figures are more than narrative devices; they are culturally resonant symbols of unresolved moral conflict, social anxiety, and spiritual imbalance that have been passed down through generations both orally and textually. Traditional stories about restless spirits or cursed landscapes serve multiple functions: they entertain, they warn against moral transgressions, and they sustain collective memories of social taboos and communal values. Folklore such as the Naale Baa legend of Karnataka—the belief that a malevolent spirit visits homes at night and can be thwarted by inscribing "Come tomorrow" on walls—attests to how mythic horror has historically informed everyday cultural practices and continues to inspire contemporary storytelling across cinematic and literary media. In recent years, Indian horror narratives have evolved beyond simple ghost stories to incorporate deeper mythic structures and culturally specific anxieties. Horror films like Stree, Tumbbad, Bulbbul, and others make conscious use of folk belief systems and archetypal figures to engage with issues including gender dynamics, social injustice, and human greed, thereby illustrating that mythological horror can reflect contemporary societal concerns while maintaining rootedness in regional mythologies. Authors like K. Hari Kumar, for example, have been noted for weaving Puranic and folk mythic elements into narratives that place supernatural entities within the lived realities of urban or rural India, thereby creating what some describe as a "contemporary Indo-Gothic" horror tradition. This synthesis allows horror to function not merely as entertainment but as a cultural mirror that reflects deep-seated fears, moral tensions, and the enduring power of myth in shaping how communities understand the unknown.

Within this broader context, *7 Hours at Bhata Road* exemplifies how mythological horror in Indian literature operates: it uses a cursed road, occult prophecy, and rural superstition as narrative loci that evoke ancient fear constructs while engaging with modern anxieties about fate, survival, and the supernatural. This positions the novel not only as a work of genre fiction but as part of a larger cultural and literary movement where mythic horror remains a vital lens through which contemporary society interprets the uncanny and negotiates its own collective fears.

Research Objectives:

1. To examine how *7 Hours at Bhata Road* incorporates mythic elements and folklore into its horror narrative.
2. To explore the significance of the cursed highway as a mythic space that bridges traditional belief systems with contemporary existential fears.
3. To analyse how ancient folklore and occult prophecy are placed in a modern-day horror.
4. To assess the novel's contribution to the ongoing evolution of horror as a genre in Indian literary discourse.

Research Questions:

1. How does *7 Hours at Bhata Road* incorporate mythic elements and folklore into its horror narrative to create cultural resonance and fear?
2. In what ways does the cursed highway function as a mythic space that bridges traditional belief systems with contemporary existential fears?
3. How are ancient folklore and occult prophecy recontextualized in the modern horror framework of the novel to reflect contemporary sociocultural concerns?
4. What contribution does *7 Hours at Bhata Road* make to the evolution of horror literature in Indian literary discourse, particularly in relation to mythological horror?

Theoretical framework:

To examine *7 Hours at Bhata Road* in the light of mythological horror, the researcher grounded analysis in several established literary theories that help explain the role of myth, folklore, narrative structures, and horror aesthetics in literature. Some relevant theories are mythological criticism and Psychoanalytic Theory.

Mythological criticism (also called *myth criticism*) is a school of literary analysis that examines the relationship between literary works and myths (traditional stories, symbols, and belief systems). It investigates how mythical elements such as themes, motifs, symbols, characters, and narrative patterns are woven into literature to convey deeper cultural and psychological meanings. Mythological critics view myths not as obsolete tales but as symbolic narratives that permeate human thought and cultural storytelling. A central concept in mythological criticism is the archetype recurring characters, situations, or symbols that appear across cultures and time periods. These archetypes evoke deep, universal responses in readers because they reflect shared psychological structures or collective cultural memories. Critics such as **Northrop Frye** and **Carl Jung** have shown how archetypes shape narrative meaning and connect literature to broader human experiences.

Psychoanalytic literary criticism is an approach rooted in the psychological theories of Sigmund Freud, expanded by later thinkers. It interprets literary texts by exploring the unconscious motives, fears, anxieties, and symbolic meanings that underlie characters, narrative structures, and motifs. In horror literature, this theory is particularly useful for understanding how supernatural and mythic elements function as expressions of repressed psychological content and deeper human fears. Freud theorized that much of human behaviour is governed by unconscious thoughts and repressed desires, elements that are not directly accessible to conscious awareness but influence emotion and action. Psychoanalysis treats myths and symbols in literature like dreams, where latent anxious content reveals itself through metaphor and imagery.

Horror narratives often externalise fears that cannot be directly faced in everyday life. Psychoanalytic criticism interprets supernatural and mythic horror not merely as shocking plot devices but as symbolic representations of psychological processes such as anxiety, repression, and trauma. This aligns well with mythic horror because mythic elements in horror often express what lies beyond rational understanding, much like the unconscious in Freudian theory.

Analysis of *7 hours at Bhata road*:

7 Hours at Bhata Road is not just a conventional horror story about a cursed road and a terrifying entity; the text operates on multiple symbolic levels that reflect both cultural mythic structures and psychological dynamics of fear, repression, and collective anxiety. The story opens with a line,

When you don't believe in hell, Hell comes to you (Bhamse, 22)

This recurring dialogue in the novel provides a wide range of mythological motifs, and the author's use of them to show the mythic impact. The story opens with a silent night for the travelers Sandesh, his pregnant wife Aditi, and their child Parth, as they are forced to take a detour at Bhata Road for unknown reasons. From the beginning author tries to keep an eerie tone in the novel as it creates a gloomy mood well paired with flashbacks of the emergence of horror entities. The warning sign that is given on the road shows possible danger coming to them.

Road closed from 10:30 pm to 5.:30 am (Bhamse, 17)

As this sign is ignored by Sandesh, it invites calamity to them automatically. The story moves back and forth, connecting the origin of the myth of Bhata and its consequences in the present time. In the past child named Darshan faced some abnormality in his body as well as in his behaviour and was taken to *Pundit* by his parents, as he was found possessed by them. The mantra given by *Pundit,* "*Om Klim Kalika- Yei Namaha*" to escape demonic events, shows crelevance of myth in the present times and its proper use by people. Pregnant blind woman in a purple saree, showcased as a mythic demonic figure, continuously maintains mystery and horror in the story called Daughter of the Demon, keeping the audience on the edge. Direct encounter with the witch becomes deadly to the children of the village as everyone falls sick and rushes to *Pundit ji* for a cure. The author connects present unfortunate events with mythology as a reference to the past, which keeps coming up in the story. Later, several unfortunate events took place. Possible danger is predicted by the author as he says,

Everything is destroyed. There are dead crows all over the farm, and maggots and insects chewing through their bodies. Every single crop in the farm wilted and rot overnight. The farms are destroyed (Bhamse, 39)

From a mythological criticism perspective, the origin of the curse functions like an origin myth: villagers perform an occult ritual to avert hell, and in consequence, a prophecy arises foretelling the birth of hell in Bhata, destined to spread into the world. In mythological terms, prophecy and ritual are core mythic devices: they explain suffering, structure the narrative's moral economy, and invoke cosmic consequence for transgression. The road itself becomes a liminal mythic space, a threshold between the normal world and the realm of cosmic justice dictated by the prophecy, where everyday logic surrenders to the supernatural. The convergence of mythological motifs with deeply rooted psychological fears creates a narrative that resonates both culturally and emotionally. The cursed highway, haunted between 10:30 p.m. and 5:30 a.m., becomes a symbolic site where the ancient myth is experienced rather than merely remembered. The recurrent conditions (men die, women go blind, children drown) are not random horror mechanics; they read like symbolic mythic consequences tied to collective human fears about fate and punishment. The dual timeline, the cursed past, and the family trapped in the present mirror how myths persist across generations, shaping collective behaviour long after their origins are forgotten. In myth criticism, such a structure suggests that mythic memory is alive, guiding emotional and cultural responses to the unknown.

When psychoanalytic theory is paired with myth analysis, the horror in the novella becomes a reflection of unconscious psychic processes. Psychoanalytic literary critics argue that horror stories externalize internal fears, repressed anxieties, and unconscious conflicts through symbolic figures and haunting imagery. The Bhata road, familiar by day, terrifying at night, operates like the unconscious in the Freudian sense: a realm

where familiar life turns uncanny and where repressed material rises to consciousness. The family's forced journey on this road parallels a psychological descent into repressed fear. Nighttime travel is not merely atmospheric; it symbolises the activation of unconscious dread that ordinary daylight living represses. In psychoanalytic terms, the road reflects the mind's unpredictable depths where rational control breaks down, and fears that the conscious self has pushed away exert influence. When characters cannot escape the road's grip, it mirrors how individuals feel trapped by unconscious anxieties when confronted with trauma or crisis. The haunting figure that appears on the road, a witch-like presence with terrifying features, can be read as a psychological projection of collective and individual fears. In Freudian analysis, monsters often represent repressed contents of the psyche that have been projected outward, turning internal fear into an external antagonist. The supernatural figure embodies fear of the unknown, loss of control, and existential threat fears that are typically suppressed in everyday life but surge in moments of crisis. This aligns with psychoanalytic ideas of horror as the externalization of internal anxieties, where the mind gives form to what it fears but cannot consciously articulate. The intersection of myth and psyche in *7 Hours at Bhata Road* becomes most visible in its symbolic doubling of past and present families. The ancient curse, rooted in ritual and prophecy, represents cultural collective fear, a mythic narrative passed through time. The contemporary family's psychological experience of panic, helplessness, and time pressure illustrates individual psychological fear reacting to that mythic structure.

Under mythological criticism, myth functions as the deep structure of the narrative, the template of cosmic justice and predestination that shapes fear at the collective level. Under psychoanalytic theory, the same structure works as a psychological template, activating unconscious fear networks within readers' and characters' minds. When the prophecy begins to unfold, the horror experienced is both mythic (collective anxiety) and personal (unconscious fear). This dual layering shows that *7 Hours at Bhata Road* does not merely tell a story of supernatural danger; it constructs a mythic narrative that captures psychological fear at both the collective cultural level and the individual unconscious level. Such a combination aligns with psychoanalytic interpretations of myth and literature, where stories serve as bridges between cultural symbolism and psychic processes. A particularly striking aspect of the narrative is the presence of pregnancy in the contemporary storyline. Pregnancy symbolises transition, vulnerability, and the beginning of life, all of which are powerful unconscious themes. In psychoanalytic thinking, transition states (birth, death, threshold conditions) are deeply tied to unconscious conflict and anxiety. Here, the pregnant protagonist's labour on the cursed road may symbolise the birth of repressed fear into conscious awareness, or the confrontation with mortality even as new life begins. This aligns with psychoanalysis's interest in how narratives externalize conflicted psychological states, especially those involving creation and destruction, anxieties that extend beyond surface plot into unconscious symbolism. The combined mythological and psychoanalytic reading suggests that the horror of *7 Hours at Bhata Road* operates through a fusion of cultural mythic memory and psychological fear structures. Mythic fear: prophecy, cursed terrain, ritual consequence, tapping into shared cultural narratives of doom and supernatural consequence. Unconscious fear: repression, projection, the uncanny, exploring how deep anxieties manifest symbolically in narrative structure and haunting figures. Together, this integrated interpretation demonstrates that the text uses myth not only as a storytelling device but as a psychological mirror, reflecting how collective cultural fears and individual unconscious anxieties intersect in horror literature. The prophetic curse becomes both a cultural myth shaping how a community imagines danger and a psychological trigger that activates unconscious dread in readers and characters alike.

Conclusion (Shortened)

7 Hours at Bhata Road by Ajinkya Bhasme blends **cultural myth and psychological depth** to create a uniquely compelling horror narrative. The novella uses an ancient prophecy and a cursed highway rooted in folk belief. Where a haunting entity dooms travelers between 10:30 p.m. and 5:30 a.m., to evoke the power of **mythic structures** that explain fear and fate within a culturally specific framework. The road becomes a liminal space where collective memory and supernatural law intersect, grounding horror in longstanding narrative traditions while engaging with contemporary existential dread. Viewed through

mythological criticism, the story's prophecy, ritual lore, and archetypal figures reflect how communal narratives of fate and punishment endure and shape cultural fear responses. Simultaneously, a **psychoanalytic reading** highlights how these mythic elements externalise deep **unconscious anxieties** — transforming the familiar (a road, a family, night travel) into an uncanny terrain of repressed sfears about death, loss, and vulnerability. Together, these lenses reveal that the novel's horror works at both the **cultural level (shared folklore and myth)** and the **psychological level (individual fears and unconscious drives)**.

In conclusion, *7 Hours at Bhata Road* demonstrates how modern Indian horror can harness myth and psyche to explore **the persistence of ancient beliefs in contemporary life**, making it significant in the evolution of horror literature. Its narrative resonates not just as a chilling tale but as a reflection of how fear is constructed and lived culturally and psychologically — in the modern era.

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Representation of Sita in the works of Toru Dutt and Nandini Sahu

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Abstract

Sita, the central female figure of the ancient Indian epic Ramayana, has traditionally been celebrated as the embodiment of feminine virtue, purity, obedience, and sacrifice. For centuries, her character has shaped the cultural imagination of Indian society and served as a normative model of ideal womanhood. However, such a portrayal, embedded in patriarchal ideology, confines her to a submissive role that often legitimizes women's marginalization. Contemporary Indian English writers challenge this monolithic image by reinterpreting Sita through empowering perspectives. This paper examines poetic representations of Sita in the works of Toru Dutt and Nandini Sahu through an ecofeminist lens. It argues that modern retellings foreground her intrinsic connection with nature, resilience, and regenerative strength, thereby redefining her as an active and autonomous subject rather than a passive sufferer. By linking women's experiences with ecological exploitation, ecofeminism enables a revaluation of mythic women as figures of resistance and healing. The study demonstrates how these reinterpretations transform Sita into a symbol of vitality and female agency within Indian English literature.

Keywords*Sita, ecofeminism, Indian English poetry, mythological women, reinterpretation of myths, feminist literary criticism.*

Paper

Indian mythology has profoundly influenced cultural constructions of gender and morality. Among epic heroines, Sita occupies a unique place as the paradigmatic figure of ideal womanhood. As represented in Valmiki's Ramayana, she is revered for loyalty, chastity, and unwavering devotion to her husband. Her character has long functioned as a moral template for Indian women, shaping expectations of obedience and sacrifice. Yet this idealization simultaneously restricts her agency, reducing her identity to endurance and suffering. Feminist critics argue that such mythological models reinforce patriarchal norms by presenting submission as virtue. Kumkum Roy observes that epic women often become "didactic figures" whose lives instruct women to accept social limitations rather than question them (Roy 48). Consequently, Sita's story has historically been read not as empowerment but as acquiescence.

Modern Indian English literature revisits these inherited narratives and reinterprets them to foreground suppressed voices. Within this revaluation, ecofeminism provides a productive lens for understanding the connection between women's oppression and the exploitation of nature. Applying this framework, the present paper analyzes how Toru Dutt and Nandini Sahu reconstruct Sita as a figure of resilience, ecological harmony, and autonomy. Scholars increasingly recognize myth as a contested space where gender ideologies are constructed and challenged. Early readings of the Ramayana emphasized Sita's chastity and obedience, reinforcing the patriarchal ideal of the self-sacrificing wife. However, feminist scholarship critiques this interpretation. Roy contends that the glorification of Sita's suffering "normalizes feminine silence" (52).

Toru Dutt's Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan marks an early attempt to retell mythological stories in English while humanizing female figures (Dutt 112). Later writers such as Nandini Sahu and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni reimagine epic women through interior monologues and alternative perspectives, granting them emotional depth and agency.

Ecofeminist theorists Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva argue that women and nature are jointly subjected to patriarchal control and commodification (Mies and Shiva 13). Shiva further asserts that women's association with nurturing practices positions them as natural allies in ecological preservation

(Shiva 42). These insights are central to interpreting Sita's symbolic relationship with the earth. Ecofeminism critiques the hierarchical thinking that justifies domination over both women and the environment. According to Mies and Shiva, patriarchal systems treat nature as inert matter and women as reproductive resources, denying both autonomy (14). Literature often reflects this dynamic by depicting female bodies as territories to be controlled. Ecofeminism challenges such binaries and highlights women's life-sustaining roles. Shiva describes women as "custodians of biodiversity and survival knowledge" (56). When applied to mythological narratives, this approach enables a reinterpretation of female characters as embodiments of regeneration rather than submission. Sita's origin myth strongly supports such reading: she is discovered in a furrow of the earth and finally returns to the soil. This cyclical relationship with the earth suggests that her identity transcends domestic roles and aligns with ecological continuity.

In the classical epic, Sita accompanies Rama into exile, endures abduction, and undergoes the Agni pariksha to prove her chastity. Even after her vindication, she is later banished due to public suspicion. Despite her innocence, she remains silent and obedient. Valmiki portrays her endurance as moral greatness (Valmiki 644). This representation equates virtue with suffering. Feminist critics note that such a model conditions women to internalize self-denial. Roy argues that Sita's compliance becomes "a lesson in idealized submission" (55). While her patience is admirable, it leaves little room for personal autonomy. Yet the epic also contains subtle resistance. At the end, Sita refuses another trial and calls upon Mother Earth to receive her. This act can be read as a final assertion of agency—a return to her elemental origin rather than continued subjugation.

Toru Dutt's poem "Sita" offers a gentler, more introspective portrayal. The poem recalls Sita's life in the forest through the memories of children listening to their mother's narration. Instead of focusing on suffering, Dutt highlights the serenity of the woodland environment and Sita's harmony with it (Dutt 115). Nature becomes a sanctuary rather than a site of exile. Trees, streams, and birds mirror Sita's emotional resilience. This imagery subtly repositions her from victim to nurturer. The forest sustains her, and she, in turn, becomes part of its life cycle. Dutt's sympathetic tone humanizes Sita and grants her psychological depth. By embedding her within nature, the poem anticipates ecofeminist concerns and resists the rigid moralization of the epic tradition.

Nandini Sahu's poetic sequence Sita presents a more explicit ecofeminist vision. Sahu reclaims Sita as "the daughter of the soil," whose identity is inseparable from the earth's fertility (Sahu 27). The forest is depicted not as abandonment but as empowerment—a space where she rediscovers her inner strength. Sahu critiques patriarchal judgment and emphasizes autonomy. Sita's suffering transforms into regenerative energy, much like nature's capacity to renew itself after destruction. Her voice becomes assertive rather than silent. Through metaphors of seeds, rivers, and seasons, Sahu aligns feminine experience with ecological processes. This connection reinforces ecofeminist claims that women's resilience mirrors nature's vitality. Consequently, Sita emerges as a figure of survival and resistance rather than submission.

The reinterpretations by Dutt and Sahu reveal how myth can be reshaped to address contemporary feminist concerns. Both poets shift attention from Sita's suffering to her strength and ecological connectedness. This transformation challenges the patriarchal narrative that equates femininity with passivity. Ecofeminism clarifies this shift. Just as nature resists exploitation through regeneration, Sita endures and transcends oppression. Her return to the earth becomes symbolic not of defeat but of liberation. By aligning her with ecological cycles, these writers grant her cosmic rather than domestic significance. Such readings empower modern audiences to reconsider inherited ideals. Instead of emulating silence and sacrifice, women can identify with Sita's resilience and self-realization. Myth thus becomes a source of feminist resistance rather than social conformity.

In conclusion we can say that Sita has long served as a cultural archetype of ideal womanhood, yet her traditional portrayal often reinforces patriarchal expectations. Contemporary Indian English poetry, however, reimagines her through ecofeminist perspectives that foreground strength, autonomy, and harmony with nature. Toru Dutt and Nandini Sahu transform Sita into a figure of vitality and regeneration, challenging the narrative of passive suffering. Through these reinterpretations, myth becomes a dynamic medium capable

of articulating feminist consciousness. The ecofeminist Sita stands not as a symbol of submission but as an emblem of resilience and empowerment. Her story demonstrates that reclaiming mythological women can contribute meaningfully to both gender justice and ecological awareness.

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Myths in Media during Crisis Situation

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Abstract

Media plays crucial role in building public perception during crisis situation like pandemics, natural disasters, conflicts and economic breakdowns. These situations create a fear, misinformation and making audiences more vulnerable to myths. Media as a primary source of information during crisis. This plays a important role in either dispelling or amplifying such myths. The present research paper studies the circulation and impact of myths in media during pandemics. The present paper also analyses how old media, todays digital platforms and social media contributes to the circulation of myths through sensationalism, misinformation, selective faming and unchecked narratives. This paper also explores the socio-psychological factors. The present research evaluate the ethical responsibility of media Institutions also the role of media literacy in countering myth formation. The present paper concludes by emphasizing the need for responsible journalism and critical media consumption to minimise the influence of during crisis situations.

Key words *: Myths, Social media, Rumours, Crisis Communication.*

Introduction

In 21st century media plays a crucial role as a primary source of information, interpretation and decision making mainly in the crisis situation. There are some major events like pandemics, Natural disasters, Wars, Political upheavals and economic breakdowns completely change the normal social order. These events generate uncertainty, fear and anxiety. During these conditions people depends completely on media such as print, broadcast and digital to understand the nature of the crisis. Sometimes reporting during crisis gives rise to myths, rumours and misleading narratives. It shapes public thought process in powerful ways. Basically, myths are socially constructed narratives during crisis situations. It simplifies complex reality's a assign blame, reinforce stereotypes and provide psychological comfort in uncertain times. Sometimes myths spreads because of lack of verification or time pressure or deliberately through political agendas, propaganda and algorithm-driven misinformation on digital platforms. Social media accelerates the circulation of myths by enabling rapid sharing, emotional engagement and echo chambers. It blurs the boundary between truth and Falsehood.

Myths give far-reaching impacts myths created through media can influence public behaviour, fuel panic, promote stigma and discrimination. This paper seeks to examine the role of media in the creation, circulation and reinforcement of myths during crisis situations. It majorly studies the structural, psychological and Technological factors that contribute to myths making in media narratives. It analyses their consequences on society. The present research contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationship between media, myths and crisis communication in the modern information ecosystem.

Objectives

The present research paper aims to achieve the following objectives

1. To study the nature and types of myths circulated by Media.
2. To analyse the role of traditional media and social media in the creation of myths.
3. To study the impact of media-generated myths

Hypothesis

Media coverage during crisis situations significantly contributes to the spread of Myths and misinformation.

Significance of the study

The present research holds academic and social significance as it addresses a critical issue in contemporary media environment. The present study contributes to the field of media studies and crisis communication with the help of analysing how myths are constructed. The research work significant for media, professionals, policy makers, educators and researchers also helps to media literacy discourse.

Research Methodology

The present research work adopts a qualitative our descriptive research method. This method is considered proper as the study aims to understand the nature, formation as well as impact of myths circulated by the media. This method allows for in-depth the interpretation of media narratives, symbols and meanings related to the myths. The major study is primarily based on secondary data. There are also selective inputs wherever necessary.

Scope and Limitations

The scope for the present research study is limited to the examination of myths, mainly circulated through media during crisis situation. Mainly the study focuses on traditional media sources like newspapers, televisions, radio and Digital platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp Twitter and YouTube. The present research has certain limitations like it depends on secondary data. The study does not an include experimental or longitudinal analysis of audience behaviour.

Review of the relevant Literature

There are many scholars who examined behaviour and misinformation during crises. These studies provide a strong foundation for the present study.

In his study Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) Highlighted the way of the Misinformation thrives in emotionally charged environments. Specially during crisis situations. This study studied the economic and physiological reasons behind false news.

False information and news spreads very faster than verified news on social media platforms due to modernity said by Vosough, Roy and Aral (2018). There findings are particularly relevant in understanding myth circulation during crises.

Brennen et al study shows the analysis of COVID-19 misinformation, identified that health related myths were amplified through social media.

The existing literature related to this topic clearly indicates that while media serves as an essential crisis communication tool. It simultaneously acts as a catalyst for myths when information is incomplete as well as emotionally framed.

Major analysis

1) Conceptual understanding of myths

From the traditional association with ancient stories and folklore to contemporary the concept of the myth evolved. Significantly as a powerful social and media construct. According to Ronald Barth myths as a system of communication which transform with the time from cultural meaning into accepted truths. Myths simplify complex realities offering emotionally appealing explanations in the crisis situations. These kinds of media differ from rumours as well as fake news, that's why they gain social acceptance with time. In the process of analysing how the media influences perception during crisis understanding myths as constructed narratives is essential.

2) Nature of crisis situations

There are so many characteristics of crisis situation threaten social stability, safety and normal functioning of society. Crisis are in the form of health emergencies, natural disasters, political complex, communal violence, economic collapse or Technology types of situations create an atmosphere of pear urgency and unpredictability in the situation of crisis people completely on media to know what is happening and why it is happening

3) Role of media during crisis situation

Media plays crucial role in the crisis's situation. It informs the public, shapes narrative and influences collective responses. Newspapers, television and radio are the traditional media have long been

trusted sources of crisis information. Now a days digital and social media platform became dominant real time communication. There are certain reasons behind sensationalism and incomplete reporting like the pressure to deliver breaking news, maintain audiences attention and compete for visibility. In the number of cases media unintentionally contributes to myth making by repeating unverified information.

4) Mechanism of myth creation in media

With the help of specific mechanisms myths in media are created and reinforced. These are sensational headlines, repetitive messaging selective presentation of facts and emotional storytelling. With the help of algorithms social media platforms intensify this process. These algorithms prioritize emotionally engaging content allowing myths to spread rapidly and widely. Now a days there is blur line between professionalism and personal opinion because of user generated content influences and viral trends. Repeated exposure to such news normalizes Myths.

5) Psychological factors behind myths acceptance

Psychological factors is one of the most important factor in the acceptance and spread of myths during crisis situations. Because of fear, anxiety and uncertainty people loses ability to accept information. Confirmation bias lead people to accept information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs. But social identity and group belonging influence what narratives are trusted and shared. Sometimes myths provide emotional comfort with the clear causes, villains or solutions even when these are inaccurate.

Conclusion

The study explains the crucial role media plays in creating and shaping public understanding during crisis conditions. It analyses how myths emerge, circulate and gain legitimacy within media culture. These types of crisis creates situations of uncertainty, fear and emotional vulnerability. It makes audiences more receptive to simplified explanations and symbolic narratives. In the process of myth-making traditional or Digital often becomes a powerful site. It either by amplifying unverified information employing sensational frames or reproducing dominant ideological discourses.

The findings of this research shows that myths in media are not merely the result of misinformation. It is socially constructed narratives influenced by psychological needs, institutional pressures, political interest and technological mechanisms. The speed of digital communication and algorithmic nature of social media platforms intensify the spread of myths and its result is blurring the line between fact and fiction. These kinds of myths can have serious consequences, like public panic stigmatization of communities, erosion of trust in authorities related to the crisis events.

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Reinventing Sita: A Comparative Study of Myth and Cultural Truth in The Forest of Enchantment and The Liberation of Sita

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Sita has been presented as an ideal woman in Indian mythology. She is glorified because she is patient, obedient, chaste, and self sacrificing. This image of Sita has shaped cultural expectations and gender norms in Indian society; a woman is expected to be like Sita. These conventional notions about Sita have been challenged in the contemporary Indian English novels and short stories in order to question the cultural truths. The present paper aims to compare Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's The Forest of Enchantment (2019) and Volga's, The Liberation of Sita (2016) to re-imagine the myth of Sita through feminist perspective. The key episode in the selected texts such as Sita's marriage, her trial by Fire, her exile, and her motherhood are analysed to explore how these text subvert the episodes as acts of resistance and selfhood. The selected texts serve as cultural critiques of the traditional narratives of Sita. One could understand the distinction in handling Sita's character in both the texts. While Divakaruni stresses Sita's emotional endurance and moral resilience, Volga projects Sita's figure as a revolting woman, who consciously rejects patriarchal norms and social morality. The paper argues that contemporary gender concerns are evident in Sita's myth, which is a dynamic cultural discourse and not a static narrative.
Keywords: *Feminist retailing, myth, Sita, cultural truth*

Mythology plays an important role in Indian cultural consciousness. Myths are not just fictitious tales but they help to explain social norms and ethical values. They also serve as repository of collective memory and are considered for philosophical reflections. The Ramayana and Mahabharata are not just as epics but for ages they are considered as texts narrating ideas for duty, righteousness, social order, and gender roles. Sita, among several key women figures in Indian mythology, is the most iconic and controversial character who represents an ideal woman. Traditionally Sita has been worshipped for her qualities like purity, obedience, and sacrifice, and her virtues are often being measured against women's conduct.

Feminist scholars however challenge the traditional image of Sita. Through intense scrutiny and criticism of the episodes in the Ramayana, they bring out the sufferings of Sita due to the dominant patriarchal values of the time. In the 20th century Durga Bhagwath, the well known Marathi writer, in her book *Prasangika* (1975) gives a rational and radical reading of the Ramayana. Durga Bhagwat projects Sita as a wronged and quietly defiant woman, who underscores the moral failures of the society in judging her. In the 21st century Indian English literature, especially Indian women English novelists have reinterpreted Sita's stories from marginalised perspective. These narratives are contemporary versions of the myth, which aim to recover silenced voice of Sita. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantments* and Volga's *The Liberation of Sita* follow this literary trend. Although both the texts retell Sita's story from their own perspectives, they differ in their ideological and fundamental approach. Divakaruni tries to narrate Sita's story from the traditional point of view of sacrifice, dharma, and duty. She explores Sita's inner conflicts, her acts of resilience and defiance, but her narrative follows traditional values of womanhood. Volga's attempt is to offer a radical feminist reinterpretation of Sita's myth. She presents Sita as a symbol of freedom and self realisation. This paper deals with how the selected texts reinvent myth and cultural truth, and how they

portray changing attitudes towards gender and identity in contemporary Indian society. The present paper is aligned with the objectives of the National Education Policy 2020, which encourages reinterpretation of indigenous knowledge systems through contemporary studies.

M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Harpham in their *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (2015) define a myth as:

a myth is one story in a mythology—a system of hereditary stories of ancient origin which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group, and which served to explain (in terms of the intentions and actions of deities and other supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, to provide a rationale for social customs and observances, and to establish the sanctions for the rules by which people conduct their lives (230)

Thus, myths have often been considered as fictitious narratives far from the reality. Mircea Eliade argues that myths provide religious truths and explain basic human nature (Eliade 5–6). Barthes views myths as ideological systems which explain power structures and strengthen cultural values. (Barthes 129–31). In India mythologies have served as cultural histories and moral obligations legitimizing social hierarchies and gender roles.

Feminists, however, question the truth and validity of the myths and expose their biased ideological perspective. They reinterpret the myths providing alternative viewpoints. The feminists do not reject mythological narratives altogether but engage with them to find implied meanings and possibilities. Contemporary writers reinterpret mythologies to address modern concerns; they go back to the mythologies to search answers for the modern social problems. *The Forest of Enchantment* and *The Liberation of Sita* are such texts. By retelling Sita's story, these texts transform myth into a dynamic entity questioning patriarchal authority and reshapes cultural truths.

The Ramayana offers a limited insight into Sita's character, her inner life particularly during her childhood and marriage. Divakuruni adds in the story of Sita by presenting her as an intelligent, adventurous, curious, and emotionally complex girl from childhood. Divakaruni projects Sita as one who is aware of social expectations since her young age. Her upbringing in Mithila and her relationship with her mother Sunaina reveal her understanding of social milieu. Divakaruni romanticize her marriage with Rama, but soon Sita gets ready for sacrifice without any hesitation. Divakaruni suggests that she has been ready for sacrifices since her childhood. Thus, Sita's early upbringings are described in such details that readers become aware that Sita is ultimately going to suffer in life.

Volga's narrative focuses more on Sita's life after her marriage than her early life. Through it Volga criticizes the institution of marriage which puts women under several social restrictions. She portrays Sita's marriage with Rama as a long journey towards losing her identity. Marriage, thus, becomes a social tract which demands obedience and silence from women. They are asked to follow the customs without ever questioning them.

Another important episode in Sita's life is her exile with Rama. The exile serves as a metaphor for marginalisation and displacement for Sita. Divakaruni depicts Sita's exile as a space for emotional growth, patience, and suffering. The forest stands as a dangerous place to live in but at the same time it is a sanctuary for Sita to develop resilience and introspection. *The Forest of Enchantments* does not romanticise Sita's suffering in exile but sees her acceptance of the fate dictated by Dharma. Sita considers it as an opportunity for her psychological and emotional growth.

Volga in her *The Liberation of Sita* presents Sita's exile as her deliberate act of liberation or freedom. In order to reject the social order which demands proof of loyalty and purity from women, Sita chooses to abandon Rama. The forest, thus, for Sita becomes a space of liberation, awakening and self respect. This major shift in Volga's narrative regarding the exile - from punishment to liberation - marks Sita different from the one in the mythic narrative.

'Agni Pariksha' - trial by fire - is a vital episode in the Ramayana. 'Agni Pariksha' is now an accepted phrase in Indian culture, meaning 'to face a very difficult test or challenge'. In Divakaruni's novel 'Agni Pariksha' is treated as a deeply traumatic experience for Sita; it is seen as the cruelty of the social psyche. Although Sita survives, the novel considers the episode to criticise cultural injustice toward women because

men are not subject to such trials, whereas women constantly undergo moral scrutiny. Sita silently endures the injustice to show her disapproval of patriarchal values which govern society.

The Liberation of Sita stands out as a contemporary mythology because it emphasises female solidarity. Volga shows Sita's meetings with women who have been vilified and marginalized in the traditional myths, which is also an additional feature of the narrative. Sita's interactions with these women help create a collective narrative of women's resistance against patriarchy, as these women, too, share their experiences of suffering and resilience with Sita.

Divakaruni focuses mainly on Sita's emotions in her novel. Nature presents in nurturing force symbolising solace and strength in it. Divakaruni showcases Sita's introspective nature, whereas Volga depicts Sita as an extrovert, who is trying to form collective awakening among other women. This is the major difference between the selected narratives in their reinterpretation of Sita's character.

Rama is also portrayed divergently by the two writers. Divakaruni shows Rama as a complex figure torn between kingship and social duty. Rama is shown emotionally distant from Sita, but he is not entirely denigrated. Divakaruni justifies Rama's aloofness towards Sita but Volga sees Rama as a symbol of patriarchal authority whose moral rigidity is the cause of injustice to Sita. By fracturing the traditional image of Rama, Volga reframes the narrative towards Sita's self awareness.

Sita's reinterpretation in the selected narratives open up contemporary debates on identity, gender, freedom, and cultural injustice. Divakaruni's Sita negotiates with traditional social structure; she is presented as submissive and tolerant, whereas Volga's Sita is a radical feminist, challenging the status quo. These texts demonstrate that a myth can have multiple interpretations reflecting diverse views.

These texts truly help in reclaiming women's voices. They transform mythology for addressing ethical and gender issues demanding social change rather than merely engaging in cultural nostalgia. The comparative study *The Forest of Enchantments* and *The Liberation of Sita* presents how myths are reinterpreted in contemporary Indian English literature to examine traditional cultural truths. Whereas Divakaruni shows Sita as a tolerant, enduring, and introspective woman, Volga radically subverts Sita's traditional image presenting her as a woman seeking liberation.

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The Critical Study of Indian Paintings in Ancient India

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Abstract-

The presented research paper focuses on the critical study of Indian paintings in ancient India.India has a long tradition of artistic excellence and painting is one of the major mediums that have been used to express it. The history of paintings can be known from primitive rock paintings of bhimbetaka,Mirzapur and Panchmarhi.The pre-historic paintings were generally executed on rocks and these rock engravings were called Petroglyphs.One of the oldest surviving murals of Indian subcontinent,Ajanta caves were carved in 4th century AD out of volcanic rocks.The mural paintings in the Ajanta caves are found in various styles.Though the Ajanta caves are famous for its sculptures there are beautiful paintings too.In this research paper included study of Sittanavasal cave paintings,Jogimara cave paintings,Miniature Paintings,Rajsthani paintings,Pahari paintings,Cubist style of paintings,Madhubani paintings.Indian paintings are so unique,antique and incredible.Indian paintings plays an important role in Indian art and culture.Indian paintings shows different forms of culture.

Introduction-

India has a long tradition of artistic excellence and painting is one of the major mediums that have been used to express it.There are several evidences that suggest that painting flourished in India since ancient times.Archaeologists have found wall paintings in parts of India,which suggest that even the early historic man in India was engaged in activities of art and leisure.The history of painting can be traced through the ancient and medieval period where the books were illustrated with paintings.Then came the miniature style that dominated the Mughal and Rajput courts.With the coming of the Europians,the art of painting and engraving took a western turn.Modern painters experimented with styles,colours and designs.Many Indian painters have gained worldwide recognition and are winning prizes and accolades for their vision.The history of paintings can be known from primitive rock paintings of Bhimbetaka,Mirzapur and Panchmarhi.They were followed by the painted pottery of the Indus Valley Civilisation,but the real beginning of the art of painting begun from the Gupta Age.There are numerous references to art of painting in the Brahmanical and Buddhist literature,for example,the representation of the myths and lore on textiles is known as Lepya Chitra.We also find references to the art of Lekhya Chitra,which has line drawings and sketches.Other types are Dhuli Chitra,Pata Chitra,etc.The play Mudrarakshasa by Vishakhadutta,also facilitated the reader by mentioning the name of various paintings or patas,which are important to understand the different style of paintings and to observe all the principles of paintings.

Research Objectives-

1.Studying the various types of paintings in ancient India.
2.Analyzing the different types of paintings in ancient India.
3.To clarify the place of classification of Indian Paintings.

Research Methodology-In this research paper primarily secondary sources method have been used.And I have conducted depth study of the texts written on Indian paintings by historians.Various research articles,scientific essays and reference books have been used in the research paper.Also the reliability of the information has been insured by studying historical documents and books of that time.These secondary sources provide conceptual depth and historical context to the research.An in depth study of Indian paintings is presented by analysing the writing style and references in books.

Analysis-India has a long tradition of artistic excellence and painting is one of the major mediums that have been used to express it.The pre-historic paintings were generally executed on rocks and these rock engravings were called petroglyphs.The first set of pre-historic paintings was discovered in Bhimbetaka caves in Madhya Pradesh.The Bhimbetaka paintings generally depicts animals like bison,beers and tigers etc.They have been called the Zoo Rock Shelter because it depicts elephant,rhinoceros,cattle,snake,spotted deer,barasingha,etc.There are three major phases of pre-historic paintings.

Upper Paleolithic Period (40000-10000 BC)- The walls of the rock shelter caves were made of quartzite and so they used minerals for pigments.One of the most common mineral was ochre or geru mixed with lime and water.They used different minerals to make colours like red,white,yellow and green,which widened their palette.The white,dark red and green were used to depict large animals like bison,elephant,rhino,tigers etc,For the human figurines,red was used for hunters and the green mostly for dancers.

Mesolithic Period(10000-4000 BC)- This period mainly saw the use of red color.In comparison to the Upper Paleolithic period,the size of the paintings also became smaller during this period.One of the most common scenes depicted in these paintings is of group hunting and several other paintings depict grazing activity and riding scenes.

Chalcolithic Period- This period saw the increase in the number of paintings using the green and yellow colour.Most of the paintings concentrate on depicting battle scenes.There are many paintings of men riding horses and elephants,Some of them even carry bow and arrow which might indicate preparedness for skirmishes.We know that these cave sites were inhabited in the late historical periods as we have paintings and samples of writing in the Ashokan and Gupta Brahmi scripts.The other set of paintings from this period are at Narsinghgarh in Madhyapradesh.They have paintings to show skins of spotted deer left for drying that provides credence to the theory that the art of tanning skins was perfected by man for providing shelter and clothing.Other paintings from this period also have depictions of musical instruments like the harp.Some of the paintings have complex geometrical shapes like the spiral,rhomboid and circle.Some of the paintings from the later period can be seen in the Jogimara caves in the Ramgarh hills in Surguja district of Chhattisgarh.These are dated to be painted around 1000 BCE.Chhattisgarh is also home to the variety of caves in the district of Kanker like the shelter of Udkuda,Garagodi,Khairkheda,Gotitola,Kulgaon etc.These shelters depict the human figurines,animals,palm prints,bullock carts,etc.which show a higher and sedentary type of living.Similar paintings can be seen in the Ghodsar and Kohabaur rock art sites in the district of Koriya.Another interesting rock paintings have also been found in Limdariha in Bastar district and Oagadi,Sitalekhni in Sarguja district.

Ajanta Cave Paintings- One of the oldest surviving murals of Indian subcontinent,Ajanta caves were carved in 4th century AD out of volcanic rocks.It consists of a set of 29 caves,carved in a horse-shoe shape.These caves are quite popular for their exquisite mural paintings that took around four to five centuries to complete under the reign of Mauryan Empire.Murals in cave no.9 and 10 belong to the Sunga period while the rest belong to the Gupta period.The paintings in cave no.1 and 2 are the most recent of the caves in Ajanta.The walls of the caves have both murals and fresco paintings.The paintings portray human values and social fabric along with styles,costumes and ornaments of that period.The emotions are expressed through hand gestures.The unique feature of the paintings is that each female figure has a unique hairstyle.Graceful poses of humans and animals adorn the walls of the caves.Some important paintings at Ajanta are scenes from the Jataka stories,paintings of various Bodhisattvas,scene of Shibi Jataka,scene of Matri-poshaka Jataka.

Transition Period Miniature- The coming of the Muslims on the Indian subcontinent was a harbinger of change and brought forth a cultural renaissance in the 14th century.One should not say that the Islamic styles took over as the traditional styles of paintings survived in the western Indian courts and a cultural synthesis took place.In the southern states of Vijaynagara a different style was emerging that was closer to the Deccan style of painting.The colours were applied in a flat manner and the dress and human outlines are demarcated in black.The view of the faces is from is from a three quarter angle and gives a detached

appearance.The landscapes are full of trees,rocks and other designs that do not try to replicate the natural appearance of the subject.

Bagh cave paintings-Representing an extension to the Ajanta school,Bagh caves in Madhyapradesh with their exquisite work rank quite close to the actual Ajanta caves in terms of their design,execution and decoration.The main difference is that the figures are more tightly modelled,have stronger outline and are more earthly and human.

Sittanavasal Cave Paintings- Located 16 km northwest of Pudukkottai town in TamilNadu,these famous rock-cut caves are known for the paintings in the Jain temples.These murals have close resemblance to Bagh and Ajanta paintings.The paintings are not only on the walls but also on the ceiling and pillars.The paintings are with the theme of Jain Samavasarana.The medium used for painting is vegetable and mineral dyes,and is done by putting colours on surface of thin wet lime plaster.The central element of the paintings in Sittanavasal is a pond with lotuses.Flowers in this pond are collected by monks,there are shown ducks,swans,fishes and animals.

Jogimara Cave Paintings- It is an artificially carved out cave located in Surguja district of Chattisgarh.It is dated back around 1000-300 BC and has few paintings and inscriptions of a love story in Brahmi script.The cave is said to be an attachment to amphitheatre and paintings were made to decorate the room.Paintings are of dancing couples,animals like elephant and fish.The Paintings have a distinct red outline.Other colours like white ,yellow and black are also used.

Miniature Paintings- The word miniature is derived from the Latin word Minimum which means red lead paint.This paint was used in the illuminated manuscripts during the Renaissance period.It is generally confused with the word minimum,which would mean that they were small in size.The Indian subcontinent has long traditions of these miniature paintings and many schools developed that have difference in composition and perspective.Miniatures are small and detailed paintings.In most of the Indian miniature paintings the human figure is seen with the side profile.They usually have bulging eyes,pointed nose and slim waist.They were often painted for either books or albums on perishable material including paper,palm leaves and cloth.This kind of painting can be attributed to the eastern and western regions.These paintings are generally found as a part of manuscripts and were generally executed on palm leaf or vellum paper.The Buddhist monks mostly used them and as their religion practiced non-violence against all living beings,there was astipulation to only banana or coconut tree leaves.These paintings are characterised by sinuous lines and subdued tones of the background imagery.There are lonely single figures in the paintings.

Conclusions-

1.Archaeologists have found wall paintings in parts of india which suggest that even the early man in India was engaged in activities of art and leisure.
2.The evidence of paintings can be found at several locations in India.
3.The paintings portray human values and social fabric along with styles,costumes and ornaments.
4.Graceful poses of humans and animals adorn the walls of the caves.
5.Social life is well depicted in ancient caves paintings.
6.Indian paintings are historical heritage of India.
7.Indian paintings shows social traditions ,ideas,customs related to social practices.
8.Indian paintings plays an important role in study of History.

Recommendations-

1.Ensure a detailed inclusion of different types of Indian Painting in the history syllabus of schools and colleges.
2.More research should be undertaken on Indian paintings.
3.Historical awareness should be raised in society related to conservation of Indian paintings.
4.Exhibitions arrangement on Indian painting styles.
5.Poster presentation competition on Indian painting styles.

6.Organize Quiz on Indian Painting styles.
7.Implementation of Indian painting styles through visiting to historical painting sites.
8.Workshop arrangement on Indian painting styles.
9.Guest lecture arrangement on Indian painting styles.
10.Project work on History of Indian painting styles.
11.Assignment work on Indian painting styles.
12.Study tour to Indian painting historical sites.
13.Heritage walk arrangement on Indian painting sites.

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A Study of Diasporic Sensibility in Michael Ondaatje's Anil's Ghost

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to analyse and interpret various aspects of diasporic sensibility as reflected in Michael Ondaatje's novel, Anil's Ghost (2000). The novel depicts diasporic return to Sri Lanka amid civil war and systemic violence. The novelist demonstrates that displacement, whether internal or transnational, produces layered experiences of unhomeliness, fractured belonging, and moral responsibility. Drawing upon diaspora theory, postcolonial criticism and trauma studies, the study interrogates themes of state violence, minority identity, memory and ethical witnessing to demonstrate how the novel reconceptualises diaspora as an experiential and relational condition rather than solely a spatial phenomenon. This study has undertaken to analyse and interpret of Michael Ondaatje's Anil's Ghost by situating it within an expanded theoretical framework of diaspora.

Keywords: *Diaspora, Trauma, Ethical Witnessing, Displacement*

1.1 Introduction:

Diaspora, traditionally conceived as the transnational dispersal of populations, has in contemporary literary and cultural studies acquired expanded connotations, encompassing internal displacement, psychological exile, fractured belonging and what may be termed as diaspora within the nation. The growing prominence of international migration has had a profound impact on how immigrant experiences are analysed and theorised. Over the last two decades in particular, diaspora studies has attracted interest from academicians, administrators, policymakers, social workers and the media, reflecting a broader recognition of migration as a defining feature of modern life. This interdisciplinary engagement has led to a significant shift in analytical focus from earlier assimilationist and nation-centric models to more in-depth frameworks that foreground transnationalism, hybridity, memory and identity construction. As a result, diaspora has come to function not only as a descriptive term for dispersed populations but also as a well-structured theoretical concept with considerable analytical depth.

Although the phenomenon of dispersion is ancient, the systematic theorisation of diaspora within academia is relatively recent. The interface between diaspora as a lived phenomenon and diaspora as a scholarly field began to take shape in the 1980s, marking a critical moment in its institutionalisation. A foundational intervention in this regard was Gabriel Sheffer's *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* (1986) which examined diasporas as significant actors in global political processes. Reflecting retrospectively at the turn of the century, Sheffer (2003) asserted in *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad* that his earlier work constituted "the first theoretical, analytical and empirical attempt" to establish diaspora as an independent field of study (p. xiii). This suggests how diaspora studies emerged through a conscious scholarly effort to theorize dispersed communities beyond ad hoc historical or sociological references.

As Khachig Tölölyan famously observes in his introduction to the inaugural issue of the journal *Diaspora*, "the term that once described Jewish, Greek and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest worker, exile, overseas community, ethnic community and so forth" (1991, pp. 4-5). This semantic expansion, while enabling diaspora to encompass a wider range of migratory experiences, also generated considerable conceptual ambiguity. Critics began to caution against the indiscriminate use of diaspora as an all-purpose term applied to all forms of mobility, thereby risking analytical dilution.

To understand this conceptual shift, it is crucial to examine the distinction between "roots" and "routes," a binary that has gained prominence in contemporary migration and diaspora studies. Popularised by James Clifford, the notion of *routes* foregrounds movement, travel and cultural navigation, standing in contrast to *roots*, which signify origin, fixity and attachment to a stable homeland. While *roots* evoke notions of ancestral soil and cultural continuity, *routes* emphasise experimentation, mobility and the reconfiguration of identity across space (Clifford, 1994, p. 304). In this view, diaspora is defined more by movement and journey than by attachment to a fixed place, shaped by historical processes of travel, displacement and settlement rather than by stable notions of origin.

In response to these limitations, Khachig Tölölyan proposed a more restrictive definition in *Rethinking Diaspora* (1996), emphasising forced dispersal, pre-existing collective identity, the active construction of collective memory, the maintenance of ethnic boundaries, sustained intra-diasporic relations, and ongoing engagement with the homeland. Tölölyan's formulation sought to distinguish diasporas from other migrant communities by foregrounding group consciousness and the centrality of memory as defining elements.

Critical responses to Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* have predominantly focused on themes of trauma, memory, human rights and the ethics of representation in contexts of civil war. Scholars have analysed the novel's fragmented narrative structure as a formal response to epistemological uncertainty and political violence, drawing on trauma theory to examine narrative silence and disruption. Anil's identity as a diasporic returnee, simultaneously insider and outsider, has been discussed in relation to authority, witnessing and belonging (Said, 2000, pp. 173-175). However, studies that analyse *Anil's Ghost* with regard to shared concerns about internal displacement, unhomeliness and the limits of national belonging are limited.

The novel has been studied extensively within its respective national and thematic contexts, however its potential contribution to an expanded understanding of diaspora, one that encompasses internal displacement, minority existence, and state-sponsored exile, has not been fully explored. The present study addresses this lacuna by situating the novel within a broadened theoretical framework of diaspora, thereby extending contemporary debates in postcolonial and diaspora studies.

1.2 Research Methodology:

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive research methodology grounded in close textual analysis and comparative literary criticism. Given the literary and theoretical orientation of the inquiry, the research does not employ quantitative or empirical methods; instead, it prioritizes critical interpretation, theoretical contextualization and comparative analysis as its primary methodological tools. The approach is interdisciplinary, drawing upon diaspora studies, postcolonial theory and trauma studies to examine how a literary text represent displacement, marginality and ethical witnessing within postcolonial nation-states.

At the methodological core of the study lies the assumption, articulated by poststructuralist and postcolonial critics, that a literary text is not merely an aesthetic artefact but culturally and historically embedded narrative that reflects and interrogates social realities. *Anil's Ghost* is therefore treated as representational texts that engage with lived experiences of violence, exclusion and fractured belonging, while simultaneously deploying specific narrative strategies to shape ethical response. Said's reflections on exile and intellectual responsibility provide an ethical framework for reading *Anil's Ghost*, particularly in relation to Anil's role as a diasporic returnee engaged in human rights documentation and testimonial practices.

Trauma theory constitutes an additional methodological axis, enabling an analysis of narrative fragmentation, silence and temporal disruption in both novels. Drawing on the work of scholars such as Cathy Caruth and Dominick LaCapra, the study conceptualizes trauma as an experience that resists linear narration and demands recursive, fractured modes of representation. This perspective facilitates the study of Ondaatje's narrative strategies in representing civil war violence.

The research unfolds in three interconnected stages. The first entails a detailed textual reading of each novel, examining narrative voice, character development, spatial imagery and symbolic motifs linked to

displacement and marginality. The second stage undertakes a comparative analysis of the two texts, identifying convergences and divergence both in their treatment of roots, rupture and belonging. The novel is examined as a text of diasporic return that foregrounds ethical uncertainty and epistemic limitation. The final stage synthesizes these findings to articulate broader theoretical insights into diasporic sensibility in postcolonial literature, linking textual analysis back to diaspora and postcolonial theory.

Throughout, the study prioritizes literary representation over historical documentation, treating the Indian Emergency and the Sri Lankan civil war as narrative contexts rather than objects of empirical investigation. At the same time, the methodology remains ethically attentive to the representation of violence, trauma and human suffering, foregrounding questions of responsibility, witnessing and narrative authority. This ethical orientation aligns with the study's broader commitment to understanding literature as a critical space for moral reflection and historical reckoning.

1.3 Analysis of *Anil's Ghost:*

This section undertakes a sustained analysis of Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* (2000) to examine how diasporic sensibility is articulated through experiences of displacement, rupture and fractured belonging within postcolonial nation-states. Drawing upon diaspora theory, postcolonial criticism and trauma studies, the analysis interrogates how the novel reconceptualises diaspora beyond paradigms of transnational migration and instead foreground internal exile, failed return and ethical uncertainty as defining features of diasporic existence. Although the novel differs significantly in narrative mode, historical context and aesthetic strategy, they converge in their representation of the nation as a site of violence that destabilises the very possibility of home.

A central point of analysis lies in the novel's shared interrogation of the nation-state as a producer of exile. Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* exposes the nation-state as a fractured and violent entity, though within the context of Sri Lanka's civil war. Here, state terror manifests through disappearances, surveillance and the systematic erasure of identity. The novel's chilling observation that Sri Lanka has become "a place where the dead were not allowed their names" (Ondaatje, 2000, p. 55) foregrounds disappearance as a form of epistemic and ethical violence. Ondaatje portrays a prolonged condition of exception in which truth itself becomes dangerous. In the novel, the nation no longer functions as a guarantor of belonging; instead, it emerges as a mechanism of exclusion that produces diasporic estrangement within its own borders.

In *Anil's Ghost*, displacement operates through return rather than departure. Anil Tissera's re-entry into Sri Lanka after years abroad does not restore intimacy or belonging; instead, it intensifies estrangement. Ondaatje explicitly marks this distinction when he writes, "She had not come back as a prodigal or a child; she returned as a professional" (Ondaatje, 2000, p. 10). Anil's diasporic sensibility is thus shaped by epistemic distance and ethical responsibility rather than nostalgia. Her Western training grants her authority within international human rights discourse, yet it simultaneously alienates her from local networks of survival. This tension reflects Edward Said's reflections on exile as a condition that produces critical awareness while foreclosing the possibility of unmediated belonging (Said, 2000, pp. 173-175).

In *Anil's Ghost*, minority status manifests through epistemic and professional marginalisation. Anil's authority as a forensic anthropologist is persistently questioned, not only because of her gender but also due to her diasporic distance from Sri Lankan sociopolitical realities. Sarath's warning that "sometimes law is on the side of power, not truth" (Ondaatje, 2000, p. 44) highlights the danger of applying universalist frameworks of justice within contexts governed by fear. The novel thus interrogates the ethics of witnessing, complicating the assumption that documentation alone can restore truth or justice. This ethical tension aligns with Dominick LaCapra's distinction between acting out and working through trauma, where representation risks repetition as much as recovery (LaCapra, 2001, pp. 70-72).

Ondaatje's Sri Lanka resists nostalgic reconstruction. Fragmented by violence and silence, it remains an unstable homeland marked by absence and loss. Memory in *Anil's Ghost* is fractured and incomplete, reflecting Cathy Caruth's assertion that trauma resists linear narration and coherent recall (Caruth, 1996, pp. 4-5). The novel's fragmented structure formally enacts this rupture, refusing narrative closure in favour of

uncertainty. Ondaatje's poetic and elliptical style privileges silence, ambiguity and epistemic restraint. The novelist emphasises the risks inherent in naming and knowing violence.

1.4 Conclusion:

In the novel, diasporic return is fraught with epistemic and ethical tensions. Anil's Westernized training and professional authority grant her access to international frameworks of justice yet simultaneously alienate her from the lived realities of Sri Lankan society, illustrating the complexities of re-engaging with a homeland fractured by civil conflict. The novelist demonstrates that displacement, whether internal or transnational, produces layered experiences of unhomeliness, fractured belonging, and moral responsibility.

In *Anil's Ghost*, professional and gendered marginalization intersects with diasporic estrangement, emphasizing the ethical stakes of witnessing violence in contexts where truth itself is contested. The narrative also reveals the centrality of temporality and narrative form in representing diasporic experience. Ondaatje's fragmented, lyrical approach mirrors the epistemic limits of trauma and the impossibility of fully narrating historical violence.

Ultimately, this study reflects that diasporic sensibility is not a fixed condition but a dynamic, ongoing negotiation of roots, routes and ruptures. Diaspora, in the novel, is simultaneously a historical reality, an affective experience and a narrative strategy. By extending diaspora theory beyond classical transnational frameworks, this research contributes to postcolonial literary scholarship by highlighting internal exile, failed return and the complex interplay between memory, belonging and responsibility.

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Myths as Moral Truths: Using Upanishad Ganga Narratives for Character Formation through Storytelling Pedagogy

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Abstract

Contemporary education systems, largely driven by examinations and measurable academic outcomes, often neglect their fundamental responsibility of character formation and moral development. This growing imbalance highlights the need for pedagogical approaches that integrate ethical reflection, emotional engagement, and cultural meaning into the learning process. The present paper examines storytelling pedagogy as an effective method for value-based education, with specific reference to Upanishad Ganga, a television series that presents Upanishadic philosophy through narrative and drama.

Through an interpretative analysis of selected episodes featuring characters such as Ratnakar, Nachiketa, Lilavati, and Satyakama Jabala, the study demonstrates how mythic narratives function as carriers of moral truths rather than mere fictional constructs. These stories engage learners cognitively, emotionally, and ethically, encouraging reflection on values such as honesty, self-discipline, empathy, resilience, and self-awareness. Drawing upon educational theory and moral psychology, the paper argues that storytelling enables learners to decode ethical realities embedded within cultural myths and internalize values through lived experience. The study further highlights practical possibilities for integrating storytelling pedagogy into classroom contexts to support holistic education and the formation of ethically responsible individuals.

Keywords: *Myth and Moral Truth, Storytelling Pedagogy, Character Formation, Upanishad Ganga, Value Education.*

Introduction

Education has always been regarded as a transformative force in shaping individuals and societies. In its deeper and more meaningful sense, education is not confined to the transmission of information or the acquisition of academic skills; rather, it is a holistic process concerned with the formation of character, values, and ethical responsibility. The true aim of education lies in nurturing the balanced development of learners' intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions. However, contemporary education systems, increasingly driven by examinations, grades, competition, and measurable outcomes, often marginalize moral education and emotional well-being.

This disproportionate emphasis on academic performance has given rise to serious concerns. A visible erosion of values such as empathy, tolerance, integrity, and social responsibility can be observed among learners. Rising levels of stress, aggression, ethical ambiguity, and social indifference suggest that intellectual competence alone is insufficient for meaningful human development. Scholars have repeatedly cautioned that education devoid of moral grounding may produce technically skilled individuals who lack ethical awareness, thereby posing challenges not only for individuals but for society at large.

Pedagogy plays a decisive role in addressing this crisis of values. The manner in which knowledge is communicated is as significant as the knowledge itself. Value-based education therefore requires pedagogical approaches that engage the learner's emotions, imagination, and conscience alongside the intellect. Storytelling is one such powerful pedagogical medium. Deeply rooted in Indian cultural and educational traditions, storytelling has historically served as a vehicle for conveying philosophical insights and ethical truths through texts such as the Upanishads, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and various folk narratives.

In this context, Upanishad Ganga emerges as a significant contemporary cultural text that presents Upanishadic wisdom through dramatic narratives. Though often perceived as mythological, these stories function as moral truths that illuminate human dilemmas, ethical choices, and inner transformation. This paper examines how storytelling pedagogy, through the narratives of Upanishad Ganga, can be effectively employed for character formation and value-based education in modern learning environments.

Concept of Storytelling Pedagogy

Pedagogy refers to the art and science of teaching and encompasses the processes through which learning influences learners' intellectual, emotional, and moral development. Sharma (2014) emphasizes that pedagogy extends beyond teaching methods to include the entire teaching–learning environment that shapes attitudes, values, and personality. Similarly, Alexander (2008) describes pedagogy as teaching guided by ideas, beliefs, values, and cultural practices. Thus, pedagogy plays a crucial role in determining not only what learners learn but also how they learn and who they become.

Storytelling pedagogy is an instructional approach in which knowledge, values, and lived experiences are communicated through thoughtfully structured narratives. It is not merely storytelling for entertainment; rather, it involves the purposeful use of stories to achieve specific educational objectives. Through narratives, abstract concepts become concrete and relatable, enabling learners to connect ideas with real-life situations. Stories allow moral values and life lessons to be absorbed naturally, making learning both meaningful and memorable.

Storytelling pedagogy is inherently experiential and reflective. As Bruner (1996) observes, humans make sense of the world primarily through narratives that organize experiences into meaningful patterns. When learners listen to or participate in stories, they become emotionally and cognitively engaged. They empathize with characters, reflect on choices and consequences, and evaluate moral dilemmas. This reflective engagement leads to deeper understanding and long-term retention.

Furthermore, storytelling pedagogy strongly supports value education. Narratives present complex moral situations that encourage learners to reflect on values such as honesty, empathy, responsibility, and courage. Narvaez and Lapsley (2008) argue that moral development is fostered more effectively through reflection than through direct moral instruction. By integrating emotion, imagination, and reflection, storytelling pedagogy contributes significantly to holistic education and character development.

Steps in Implementing Storytelling Pedagogy

For storytelling pedagogy to be effective, it must be carefully planned and purposefully implemented. When used thoughtfully, storytelling can enhance academic understanding, cultivate values, develop life skills, and support positive character formation. The following steps provide a practical framework for classroom implementation.

1. Identification of Learning Objectives

   The process begins with clearly defined learning objectives. Teachers must determine whether the story aims to develop conceptual understanding, moral values, critical thinking, or self-awareness. Clear objectives guide the selection of appropriate narratives and meaningful discussions.

2. Selection of a Suitable Narrative

   The chosen story should align with the learning objectives and suit the learners' age, cultural background, and interests. Narratives drawn from literature, cultural traditions, or real-life experiences enhance relevance and engagement, making abstract ideas easier to grasp.

3. Pre-Story Discussion and Contextualization

   Before narration, learners are prepared through brief discussions that activate prior knowledge and introduce key themes. This stage stimulates curiosity and helps learners connect the story to their own experiences.

4. Story Narration and Presentation

   Effective narration lies at the heart of storytelling pedagogy. Voice modulation, expression, gestures, and pauses help bring the story to life, fostering emotional engagement and shared classroom experiences.

5. Reflective Questioning and Dialogue
   Post-story discussions encourage learners to analyze characters' actions, motivations, and consequences. Open-ended questions promote critical thinking, moral reasoning, and respect for diverse perspectives.
6. Value Extraction and Interpretation
   Rather than prescribing moral lessons, teachers guide learners to identify values embedded in the story. This learner-centered approach enables deeper internalization of values such as compassion, responsibility, and integrity.
7. Application to Real-Life Situations
   Learners apply insights gained from the story to real-life contexts through reflective writing, role-play, or personal sharing. This step ensures that storytelling leads to meaningful behavioral change.

Storytelling Pedagogy Using *Upanishad Ganga*

Upanishad Ganga is an educational television series that presents Upanishadic philosophy through dramatic storytelling, dialogue, and symbolism. By translating abstract spiritual concepts into relatable narratives, the series bridges ancient wisdom and contemporary life. As a pedagogical resource, it is particularly effective for value education, life skills development, and character formation.

Early episodes emphasize the central Upanishadic idea that true knowledge is self-knowledge. This concept is illustrated through parallel narratives involving Narendra, who expresses philosophy through theatre, and Gaurishankar, who teaches through disciplined study. Together, these narratives demonstrate that wisdom can be transmitted through both creative and systematic approaches.

Episode 03 portrays the transformation of Ratnakar, a violent bandit, whose encounter with Sage Narada leads to deep self-reflection and moral awakening. The episode highlights that genuine transformation arises from inner awareness rather than external punishment.

Episode 07 focuses on Lilavati, daughter of Bhaskaracharya, presenting education as joyful exploration. Despite personal suffering, Lilavati channels her pain into intellectual growth, symbolizing resilience and the liberating power of knowledge.

Other episodes featuring Satyakama Jabala, Nachiketa, and Guru Upasadan emphasize honesty, perseverance, humility, and reverence for the teacher. Collectively, these narratives portray education as a transformative journey toward ethical living and self-realization.

Storytelling Pedagogy and Character Formation

The narratives in *Upanishad Ganga* vividly demonstrate the role of storytelling pedagogy in character formation. Stories such as Ratnakar's transformation and Satyakama's unwavering commitment to truth nurture moral consciousness and ethical reflection. Characters like Nachiketa exemplify self-discipline and courage, while Lilavati's journey fosters empathy and emotional resilience. Through emotional engagement and reflection, learners internalize virtues such as integrity, humility, and responsibility.

Development of Life Skills through Storytelling

Storytelling in *Upanishad Ganga* promotes essential life skills by engaging learners cognitively and emotionally. Dialogues between Narada and Ratnakar or Nachiketa and Yama stimulate critical and reflective thinking. Emotional intelligence develops as learners empathize with characters facing fear, loss, and moral dilemmas. Decision-making skills are strengthened through reflections on choices between *Shreyas* (the good) and *Preyas* (the pleasant). Additionally, storytelling enhances self-awareness, communication, attentive listening, and resilience—skills vital for holistic development.

Conclusion

The present study affirms that storytelling pedagogy possesses significant potential for nurturing character and moral consciousness in contemporary educational contexts. In an age where education is often reduced to academic performance and measurable outcomes, the narratives of Upanishad Ganga demonstrate

how culturally rooted stories can restore the ethical and human dimensions of learning. Though frequently perceived as mythological, these narratives function as moral truths that illuminate fundamental questions of self-knowledge, ethical choice, responsibility, and inner transformation.

Through characters such as Ratnakar, Nachiketa, Lilavati, and Satyakama Jabala, Upanishad Ganga presents moral dilemmas and life situations that invite reflection rather than prescribe rigid moral codes. The transformation of Ratnakar, the steadfast truthfulness of Satyakama, the courage of Nachiketa, and the resilience of Lilavati reveal how virtues such as honesty, self-discipline, empathy, and perseverance are shaped through lived experience and inner awareness. Storytelling pedagogy enables learners to engage with these narratives cognitively, emotionally, and ethically, fostering deeper internalization of values.

Moreover, the study highlights that storytelling contributes not only to character formation but also to the development of essential life skills, including moral reasoning, emotional intelligence, reflective thinking, and responsible decision-making. Integrating storytelling pedagogy into classroom practices can therefore transform learning spaces into sites of ethical inquiry and personal growth. Ultimately, by bridging myth and lived reality, Upanishad Ganga exemplifies how ancient wisdom can meaningfully inform modern education and contribute to the formation of ethically responsible and socially conscious individuals.

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Dharmavir Bharati's *Andha Yug*: A Reinterpretation of the Mahabharata War

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Abstract

The present paper studies Dharmavir Bharati's Andha Yug published in Hindi in 1953 as a reinterpretation of the Mahabharata war. The English translation of the play by Alok Bhalla has been used for the study. Though the play deals with the events on the evening of the eighteenth day of the Mahabharata war, Bharati reinterprets it on the backdrop of the Partition of India and the resultant violence, destruction and loss of moral values. Myths have been part of a largely oral tradition and are stories from ancient times told with an aim to explain natural events or describe history of a particular people. Retelling or reinterpretation of myths is undertaken to convey a new interpretation, to inform or to comment upon the myths in changed perspective or changed socio-political scenario. The paper attempts to explore the use of certain characters, episodes, comments that could be the reinterpretation of the war and the effect of the violence in the context of the atrocities, violence resulting in the post partition period. The study thus, underlines the significance of such reinterpretations which serve as an instrument of transmitting certain values to the contemporary generation.

Keywords: *Andha Yug, reinterpretation, Mahabharata war, moral degradation, myths*

The *Mahabharata* is an ancient, traditional narrative and is very close to the heart of Indians. Every generation can relate to it in its own way. *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines myth as "a story from ancient times, especially one that was told to explain natural events or to describe the early history of a people". *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* defines myths as "specific accounts of gods or superhuman beings involved in extraordinary events or circumstances in a time that is unspecified but which is understood as existing apart from ordinary human experience" (794 qtt. in Kumar and others). Time and again authors have felt the need to retell, reinterpret, the ancient myths to either challenge, to restore voices or to explore universal themes like gender, social justice, power, identity or moral values. The marginalized sections of society may be presented while challenging the established sections, patriarchy etc. Myths are also adapted to reflect current socio-political contexts especially regarding the use and abuse of modern technology or to discuss the issue of social justice. Sometimes a myth may be reinterpreted as a political allegory. Some reinterpretations focus on the emotional and psychological struggles of Gods and humanize the Divine in a manner that the modern readership find them relatable. Myths too evolve with time and a slightly different form of reinterpretation which is rapidly gaining popularity is reinterpretation of myths through change in medium like films, graphic novels, video games, television serials and also through the recent genre like mytho-fiction.

The author has attempted to explore Dharmavir Bharati's *Andha Yug* (through the English translation by Alok Bhalla) as an attempt at reinterpretation of the Mahabharat war on the backdrop of the Partition of India. The play consists of five acts and a prologue an interlude and an epilogue. It deals with the events on the evening of the last day i.e. the eighteenth day of the Mahabharata war. It appears to be a deliberate choice especially in the wake of the massive destruction, moral turpitude, unbridled revenge leading to extreme, heedless violence and barrenness, and an utter disregard for distinction between right and wrong. The title of the play itself implies literally a blind age and suggests blindness of various types- physical blindness, moral blindness, blind love for the child, blind revenge, blind hatred, blind ambition etc. All these lead to a massive destruction, darkness, barrenness towards the end of the war with the death of the divine light symbolized by Krishna. Even the Pandavas, the eventual winners are disillusioned as to their actual gain through the victory.

They fail to cherish, savour the victory. Some of the incidents in the play are creatively introduced by the dramatist reflecting his response, interpretation of the Mahabharata war in the context of the socio-political scenario at the time of the Partition of India. The Mahabharata war is a sad, bloody tale caused by blind revenge between two branches of the Kuru dynasty. Similarly, the Partition led to an equally blind hatred, revenge among two religions who had peacefully coexisted and fought their common enemy in the immediate past.

One particular incident in the play- the interaction between Ashwatthama blinded with revenge and Shiva at the entrance of the Pandava camp at night after the defeat of the Kauravas could be an allegorical reference to key political personalities of the time viz. Jinnah and Gandhi respectively. Initially Gandhiji was opposed to the idea of Partition but later on, on the insistence of Jinnah and perhaps the covert efforts of the British he agreed to his demand. Shiva deters Ashwatthama from attacking the Pandavas. Ashwatthama fails in spite of tremendous efforts and falls exhausted at the feet of Shiva. He starts praising Shiva and the pleased Shiva blesses him with success. Consequently, Ashwatthama embarks on a bloody spree brutally killing Drishtadyumna, Shikhandi and the younger Pandava children. The reinterpretation serves as a warning to the younger generation that hatred, war, unbridled ambition do not serve any worthwhile purpose. It merely leads to destruction, barrenness and ruin. The second act of the play has been aptly named as "The Making of the Beast". Ashwatthama has only one aim – to avenge the death of Dronacharya and Duryodhana. In spite of numerous efforts by Kritavarma, Kripacharya, Sanjaya and Vidura, Ashwatthama insists on reeking revenge. He declares:

'From now on
my only dharma is:
'kill, kill, kill
and kill again!' (Act II)

The episode featuring the owl and the crow in the third Act hardens Ashwatthama's resolve. It is a novel idea used by the dramatist to show the final transformation of Ashwatthama into a beast. By taking cue from birds, animals Ashwatthama in fact insults his faculty of reasoning as a human being. He degenerates into a beast, a lower order creature.

He exclaims-

'Got it!
Got it!
I have got it!' (Act III)

These lines display the beastly joy in doing wrong. Bharati takes this opportunity through his reinterpretation to drive through to the young generation to distinguish between right and wrong.

The Narrator in the first Act, 'The Kaurava Kingdom' spells the cause of the vast destruction and the age of darkness in the following words;

'Both sides in the war
violated
the code of honour
smashed it
ripped it into shreds
and scattered it-
the Kauravas perhaps more than the Pandavas'. (Act I)

Humanizing the Divine is a device frequently used by the authors in reinterpretation of myths. In *Andha Yug* Krishna, the Divine Light is not directly presented on the stage. But his presence is indicated through the music of the flute, the peacock feather and the sweet bells of his chariot. In his introduction to the translation, Alok Bhalla points out the need felt by him in translating the play. Though some translations

in English were already available, they had somehow resulted in Gandhari gaining the sympathy on losing her sons when the Divine Light and his idea of upholding Dharma should have been emphasized. Bhalla has rectified this by exposing Gandhari's plea. She tries to win the sympathy of the readers by emphasizing her loss. Though her loss is genuine, she adopts double standards when she incites Ashwatthama to take revenge and destroy the Pandava clan by urging him to kill the unborn child of Uttara. How could a mother ever be blind to the loss of another mother's child? Krishna's intervention saves the unborn Parikshit. But the play serves to teach the young generation the values held high by Indians for ages- intolerance to acts of molestation of women and foeticide. Krishna in the play is shown in a humanized form. Towards the end of the play after being cursed by Gandhari, he humbly accepts the curse and respects her as he should a mother, thus, setting an example of moral uprightness. Dharmavir Bharati's main aim in writing this play is to apprise the young generation about the idea of Dharma in a period marked with Adharma. Dharma is nothing but fulfilling one's duty according to the role assigned to you. It provides guidance regarding human behaviour, especially, the duties one should perform as a child, as a teacher, as a ruler, as a parent, as a citizen, as a friend and many other roles in life. Krishna tries to mediate between the cousins before the war, remains at the moral centre of the play but eventually fails to avert the war. Yet he presents the options that are ethical and just. He reiterates that a higher, sacred way is always available to human beings in the face of the worst situations and it is important that they make the right choice.

Bharati has also introduced an interaction between the two guards posted outside the palace at Hastinapur. The incidents serve to outline the helplessness of the marginalized sections of the society. The Myths have never given importance to the concerns of the common man. The marginalized sections of society find their voice in modern day renderings or re -readings of the myths. The incident emphasizes the concerns, agonies of the common man which remain disregarded, especially in the times of extreme atrocities like those at the time of the Partition. The privileged, the rulers are utterly callous in their behaviour.

The end of the play is very significant. The passing away of the Divine Light demonstrated by the death of Krishna ushers in an age of darkness, Kali Yug, the blind age – Andha Yug! But it also gives a glimmer of hope. The epilogue is enough evidence of it. Ashwatthama accepts that his sins were a result of the blindness of the age that flowed in his veins. In the epilogue itself Ashwatthama confesses to have witnessed the death of Krishna from behind the palm trees. The peaceful smile on the Lord's face transforms Ashwatthama. He gives him sanctuary at his feet and the divinity of Krishna is revealed to him. He says:

'The one whom you call Lord
was my enemy
but he took
even my sufferings
upon himself.

My body is still covered
with wounds
but I feel no pain.
I am condemned
yet free!' (Epilogue)

Bharati succeeds in giving hope even to the most depraved- he can be redeemed if he submits to the Divine, the right. Bharati communicates Krishna's philosophy of Karma through Vidura – "Only virtuous actions which man performs by his own free will can be his protection, his safety". Ashwatthama cannot be forced to accept the path of right, he can hope for redemption only when the change of mind comes over through the exercise of his own free will.

Thus, *Andha Yug,* a reinterpretation of the *Mahabharata* is a metaphoric representation of the socio-political situation prevalent at the time of the Partition and also serves as a guidance in morality and emphasizing the futility of war, unbridled ambition and blind revenge.

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Myths and Realities of Kautilya's Economic Thought: A Critical Study

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Abstract

Kautilya's Arthashastra is one of the most significant classical texts on governance, statecraft, and economic administration. However, public and academic discussions often reduce Kautilya's ideas to political manipulation, espionage, and harsh punishment, creating several myths about his economic philosophy. This research paper critically examines major misconceptions related to Kautilya's economic thought and presents the realities based on the text's core principles. The paper argues that Kautilya was not merely a strategist but a systematic economist who focused on state revenue, production, market regulation, welfare, and ethical administration. Through descriptive and analytical methodology, the study explores taxation, agriculture, trade, labour, corruption control, and public finance in the Arthashastra. The findings show that Kautilya supported balanced taxation, regulated markets for fairness, prioritized economic stability, and promoted welfare measures during crises. The paper also highlights the relevance of his economic ideas for modern policy debates, particularly in public finance, governance, anti-corruption, and inclusive growth.

Keywords: *Kautilya, Arthashastra, Economic Thought, Taxation, Public Finance, Market Regulation, Welfare, Governance*

1. Introduction

Kautilya, also known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta, is widely remembered as a master strategist who played a central role in establishing the Mauryan Empire. His work, the Arthashastra, is frequently described as a manual of politics and war. This narrow understanding has produced many myths, particularly about Kautilya's economic ideas. In popular narratives, he is portrayed as a supporter of ruthless state control, excessive taxation, exploitation of citizens, and unethical governance. In reality, the Arthashastra is much more than a political text. It contains extensive discussions on economic administration, revenue systems, agriculture, trade, pricing, labour management, state enterprises, crisis management, and public welfare. Kautilya treated economic stability as the foundation of state power. He viewed the prosperity of the state and the welfare of the people as interconnected. According to his approach, the state is strong only when its economic base is strong, and the economy grows only when governance is disciplined and fair. This research paper attempts to separate myth from reality in Kautilya's economic thought. It provides a critical analysis of the most common misconceptions and demonstrates how the Arthashastra offers a systematic framework of economic governance.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To identify major myths related to Kautilya's economic thought.
2. To examine the realities of Kautilya's economic principles based on the Arthashastra.
3. To evaluate Kautilya's approach to taxation, trade, agriculture, public finance, and welfare.
4. To highlight the contemporary relevance of Kautilya's economic ideas in modern governance.

3. Methodology

This study follows a descriptive and analytical research methodology based on qualitative interpretation. The primary source for the research is Kautilya's Arthashastra, especially the chapters dealing with economic administration such as taxation, revenue collection, agriculture and irrigation, trade and market regulation, public finance, state enterprises, welfare provisions, and administrative discipline. In

addition to the primary text, the study uses secondary sources including scholarly books, journal articles, and academic commentaries to understand how Kautilya's economic ideas have been interpreted across different time periods. The research process begins by identifying widely circulated myths and misconceptions about Kautilya's economics, often found in popular narratives and selective readings. These myths are then tested through text-based critical analysis, using direct economic principles and policy recommendations presented in the Arthashastra. A comparative approach is also applied to connect Kautilya's framework with modern economic concepts such as sustainable taxation, consumer protection, market supervision, welfare economics, and anti-corruption governance. The study is non-statistical in nature and does not rely on numerical data. Instead, it emphasizes logical reasoning, thematic analysis, and interpretation of economic governance models. The overall aim is to present an original, well-structured, and evidence-based understanding of the realities of Kautilya's economic thought.

4. Review of Literature (Brief)

Scholars have long debated whether Kautilya should be viewed mainly as a political realist or as an economist. Early interpretations often emphasized the text's political and military dimensions. However, modern scholarship has increasingly highlighted its administrative and economic sophistication.

Many researchers argue that Kautilya proposed a model of "state-led development," where the government actively manages resources, supports agriculture, maintains law and order, and prevents market exploitation. Some studies compare Kautilya's economic principles with modern public finance and welfare economics, especially his views on taxation and state responsibility during famine and crisis. Other scholars focus on Kautilya's anti-corruption framework, calling it one of the earliest systematic discussions of administrative ethics and accountability.

The literature supports the view that Kautilya's economic thought was not accidental or secondary, but central to his governance philosophy.

5. Major Myths and Realities of Kautilya's Economic Thought

Myth 1: Kautilya supported high and oppressive taxation

A common myth is that Kautilya believed in maximizing revenue at any cost and burdening citizens with heavy taxes. This myth comes from his strong focus on state revenue.

Reality:

Kautilya clearly supported balanced and sustainable taxation. The purpose of taxation was not to punish citizens but to fund administration, security, and welfare. His famous principle compares tax collection to a bee collecting honey from a flower—taking what is needed without destroying the source. This suggests that taxation must be moderate and should not damage the productive capacity of society.

Kautilya also understood that excessive taxation can reduce production, encourage tax evasion, and create social unrest. Therefore, the reality is that he supported a practical and growth-oriented tax system.

Myth 2: Kautilya's economics was only about strengthening the king

Kautilya is often portrayed as a thinker who only wanted to increase royal power and wealth.

Reality:

Kautilya repeatedly emphasized that the king's prosperity depends on the prosperity of the people. He recognized that citizens are the true foundation of the state's revenue. If people are poor, the state becomes weak. If people are secure and economically stable, the state becomes strong.

This is a crucial economic insight: public welfare and state strength are not separate goals but linked objectives.

Myth 3: Arthashastra is a political text, not an economic one

Many people consider the Arthashastra mainly a political manual.

Reality:

The text contains a wide range of economic topics such as:

1. Agriculture and Irrigation Development
Emphasizes increasing agricultural output through irrigation, land use, and farmer support.
2. Taxation and Revenue Administration
Focuses on systematic tax collection and efficient revenue management for a stable state.
3. Trade Regulation and Customs Duties
Explains control of trade activities and collection of customs to protect state income.
4. Price Control and Consumer Protection
Suggests preventing hoarding, fraud, and unfair pricing to safeguard consumers.
5. State Enterprises and Production
Supports state-controlled industries to ensure production and generate public revenue.
6. Labour Administration
Deals with labour discipline, wage systems, and productivity for economic stability.
7. Budgeting and Treasury Management
Highlights proper budgeting, accounting, and treasury security to avoid financial loss.
8. Anti-Corruption Systems
Provides strict measures, audits, and punishments to reduce corruption in administration.
9. Famine Relief and Crisis Economics
Recommends grain storage, relief measures, and employment support during emergencies.
Such a comprehensive discussion makes it a significant work of early economic governance.

Myth 4: Kautilya opposed free markets
Some assume Kautilya's emphasis on regulation means he was against market freedom.
Reality:

Kautilya supported markets but believed they must be regulated to prevent exploitation. His concern was not against trade, but against fraud, hoarding, black marketing, and unfair pricing. He proposed strict supervision of weights and measures and penalties for cheating consumers.

This is similar to modern market regulation, where governments allow markets to operate but intervene to ensure fairness, competition, and consumer protection.

Myth 5: Kautilya was anti-business and anti-private trade
It is often believed that Kautilya wanted the state to control everything and restrict private enterprise.
Reality:

Kautilya recognized the importance of merchants, traders, and guilds. He supported private trade, but with rules to prevent harmful practices. He did not oppose profit, but he opposed unethical profit-making that harmed consumers or the state.

In this sense, Kautilya promoted an early version of a regulated market economy.

Myth 6: Kautilya's economic system ignored welfare
Some critics argue that Kautilya was focused only on revenue and punishment, not welfare.
Reality: The Arthashastra contains clear welfare measures, especially during emergencies. Kautilya recommended state support during famine, natural disasters, and economic crises. He suggested employment creation, food distribution, and the use of state granaries in difficult times. He also emphasized the development of irrigation systems, which directly supports agriculture and rural livelihoods.
Thus, welfare was not absent; it was integrated into economic governance.

Myth 7: Kautilya promoted exploitation of labour
A myth exists that Kautilya's economic system was based on exploitation and forced labour.
Reality: Kautilya's text discusses labour discipline and productivity, but also insists on rules, accountability, and wages. His focus was administrative efficiency. While the ancient context differs from modern labour rights, it is inaccurate to describe his economic model as purely exploitative. The text aims to ensure production, stability, and order, which were essential for economic survival in that period.

Myth 8: Kautilya's economics was unethical and corrupt
Since Kautilya discusses espionage and deception, people assume his economic governance was unethical.

Reality:

In fact, the Arthashastra contains one of the strongest anti-corruption frameworks in ancient literature. Kautilya believed corruption is a major threat to the treasury and public trust. He proposed audits, supervision, record-keeping, and strict punishment for corrupt officials.

He even recognized that corruption can occur in many hidden ways, showing a deep understanding of administrative challenges. His economic thought strongly supports accountability and discipline.

6. Core Economic Principles in Kautilya's Arthashastra

6.1 Agriculture as the Foundation of the Economy

Kautilya treated agriculture as the primary source of wealth. He recommended:

1. Expansion of cultivable land

Bringing more land under farming to increase food production and revenue.

2. Irrigation development

Building canals, wells, and water systems to ensure regular farming even without rain.

3. Protection of farmers

Supporting farmers with safety, fair rules, and assistance so cultivation remains stable.

4. Settlement policies for increasing production

Encouraging people to settle in new areas and cultivate land to boost overall output.

This reflects the reality that economic stability in ancient India depended heavily on agriculture.

6.2 Strong Public Finance and Treasury Management

Kautilya placed great importance on strong public finance and effective treasury management because he believed that the stability of the state depended on a secure and well-managed treasury. He emphasized treasury protection to prevent theft, misuse, and corruption. He also recommended proper budgeting to ensure that income and expenditure were planned systematically. Kautilya stressed careful expenditure, meaning government spending should be controlled and used only for necessary public and administrative purposes. Along with this, he supported efficient revenue collection through organized tax systems and disciplined officials, so that the state could maintain economic strength and provide welfare and security to the people. He understood that without stable finance, governance collapses. This resembles modern public finance principles.

6.3 Regulation for Economic Justice : Kautilya's regulation aimed to:

1. **Prevent hoarding**

   Stopping traders from storing essential goods to raise prices illegally.

2. **Control unfair trade practices**

   Punishing cheating, fraud, and dishonest business methods in markets.

3. **Ensure honest measurement**

   Maintaining correct weights and measures so consumers are not exploited.

4. **Avoid artificial scarcity**

   Preventing deliberate shortage of goods created to increase profit and disturb market stability.

   This is a clear economic concern for fairness and market stability.

6.4 Crisis Management and Welfare Economics : Kautilya offered policies for:

1. **Famine Relief**

   Providing support to people during famine through food, aid, and government help.

2. **Grain Storage**

   Maintaining state granaries to store surplus grain for use in emergencies.

3. **State Distribution**

   Distributing food grains fairly to the public during shortages to prevent hunger.

4. **Emergency Employment**

   Creating temporary work opportunities so people can earn income during crisis periods.

5. Maintaining public order during scarcity

Ensuring law and order to control panic, theft, black marketing, and unrest in society.

These ideas connect with modern welfare economics and disaster management policy.

7. Contemporary Relevance of Kautilya's Economic Thought

Even though the Arthashastra belongs to an ancient period, many of its economic ideas remain relevant:

7.1 Taxation Policy

Modern governments still face the challenge of balancing revenue collection with economic growth. Kautilya's principle of moderate taxation and avoiding harm to producers is highly relevant.

7.2 Anti-Corruption Governance

Corruption remains a major issue in public administration. Kautilya's insistence on audits, accountability, and punishment for corrupt officials is still applicable.

7.3 Market Regulation

Modern economies regulate markets to prevent monopolies, fraud, and exploitation. Kautilya's market supervision resembles modern consumer protection and competition policy.

7.4 Welfare and Crisis Policies

The COVID-19 pandemic and climate-related disasters show the importance of welfare measures. Kautilya's emphasis on grain reserves, crisis employment, and state support during famine reflects practical welfare governance.

8. Suggestions

1. Kautilya should be studied not only in political science but also in economics and public policy.

2. Modern India can learn from Kautilya's balanced approach to taxation and revenue administration.

3. Governance reforms should focus strongly on accountability and anti-corruption systems.

4. Market regulation should aim at fairness, consumer protection, and preventing artificial scarcity.

5. Crisis management must include welfare measures and resource planning, similar to Kautilya's approach.

9. Conclusion

Kautilya's Arthashastra is often misunderstood because it is frequently viewed only as a political handbook based on power, punishment, and strategy. However, a critical analysis of the text reveals that Kautilya's thinking was deeply connected with economic planning and systematic governance. He presented a practical economic framework that focused on strengthening production, maintaining an efficient revenue system, regulating markets to prevent exploitation, protecting the treasury, and ensuring disciplined administration. Kautilya clearly understood that political stability cannot survive without economic stability, and that the real strength of the state depends on the prosperity and welfare of its people.

The myths surrounding Kautilya's economics largely arise from selective reading and modern misinterpretation, where his ideas are judged only through the lens of political realism. When studied carefully, the Arthashastra emerges as a sophisticated work of economic administration and public policy, containing advanced ideas on taxation, trade, public finance, welfare during crises, and anti-corruption governance. Many of these principles remain relevant in contemporary economic systems, especially for countries dealing with issues like corruption, inequality, market instability, and economic insecurity. Therefore, Kautilya should be recognized not only as a political strategist, but also as an important contributor to the history of economic thought and the study of effective governance.

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Literary Manifestation of Myths in Ancient and Contemporary Literature: A Study with Reference to Dorothy Koomson's The Brighton Mermaid

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Abstract

Myth has one of the most persistent narrative forms in literary history, continuously reshaped according to cultural, philosophical, and psychological needs. While ancient myths functioned primarily as sacred narratives explaining cosmic order and divine authority, contemporary literature reconfigures myth as a symbolic and psychological structure. This paper examines the transformation of mythic manifestation from ancient to contemporary literature through a comparative framework grounded in archetypal and myth criticism. To examine timeless themes, cultural identities, and contemporary societal challenges, ancient holy stories, archetypes, and folklore are adapted, reconstructed, or reimagined in literature. This is known as the literary incarnation of myths. By re-contextualising characters and narratives to appeal to modern audiences, authors utilise myths as a "cultural storehouse" to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity.

Drawing upon the theoretical perspectives of Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, and Northrop Frye, the study analyses how classical mythic patterns survive in modern realist fiction. Special attention is given to Dorothy Koomson's The Brighton Mermaid *as a contemporary reworking of mermaid mythology. The paper argues that Koomson demythologises the supernatural mermaid and remythologises female trauma, transforming an ancient symbol of dangerous femininity into a metaphor for silenced suffering and resilience. The study concludes that myth continues to function as a vital literary structure, shifting from sacred cosmology to psychological and social meaning.*

Keywords: *Myth, Archetype, Contemporary Literature, Mermaid Myth, Symbolism, Trauma, Psychological Realism*

Introduction

One of the fundamental narrative systems that human societies have used to express their conceptions of life, morality, and cosmic order is myth. Myths have influenced literary traditions by providing symbolic frameworks that go beyond historical uniqueness, from ancient epics and religious texts to folklore and legends. A myth is a traditional or legendary tale with no real basis in reality that typically centres on a certain hero or event and explains mysteries of nature, existence, or the universe. Every civilisation has myths, but Greek and Roman mythology are the most well-known in Western literature and culture. Aphrodite, the goddess of love and fertility, and Zeus, the god of the sky and the earth and father of gods and men, are two examples of mythological characters who are typically gods, goddesses, warriors, and heroes. They are also frequently in charge of the physical, emotional, and practical aspects of human existence as well as the creation and upkeep of natural elements. The term "mythology," which comes before the word "myth," refers to the collective myths of a civilisation.

Myth functions as "a culture's most basic storytelling manifestation of its worldview," according to David Leeming (1). Greek, Roman, Indian, and Biblical literature all show how myth served as holy history, populated by gods, demigods, monsters, and heroic characters.

Literature gradually shifted away from overt supernaturalism as modernity and realism gained popularity. However, myth persisted. Rather, it experienced a profound change. According to Carl Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, mythic imagery Because they come from universal psychic structures,

pictures and archetypes endure (4). In a similar vein, Northrop Frye argues that, regardless of historical epoch, literature is essentially based on mythic motifs (136). Contemporary literature, therefore, does not discard myth but adapts it into symbolic and psychological shapes. With an emphasis on the evolution of mythic function and representation, this essay examines the literary expression of myth in both ancient and modern literature. The study illustrates how traditional mermaid mythology is reinterpreted within a realism framework to address contemporary issues like trauma, silence, and exclusion using Dorothy Koomson's The Brighton Mermaid as a case study.

Myths in Ancient Literature: Sacred Narrative and Supernatural Order

Myth served mainly as a holy narrative in ancient literary traditions. Myths explained the origins of the universe, the nature of divine power, and the moral codes governing human conduct. Characters in ancient novels often exhibited supernatural talents, and human fate was strongly linked to heavenly will. Mircea Eliade notes that ancient societies regarded myth as "a true story," one that showed absolute reality (6). A great example of this hallowed role can be found in Greek mythology. Myths of Zeus, Athena, Perseus, and Hercules construct a cosmos governed by divine hierarchy and heroic action. Similarly, Indian epics such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata feature gods and semi-divine heroes whose fights define cosmic justice. The mermaid or siren figure in classical mythology exemplifies ancient mythic symbolism. Sirens are hybrid creatures whose enchanting voices lure sailors to their destruction, embodying temptation and danger (Leeming 290). These myths encode patriarchal anxieties surrounding female sexuality by presenting feminine allure as lethal. Thus, ancient myths externalise cultural fears through supernatural imagery.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates myth criticism, archetypal theory, and psychological approaches to literature. The purpose of this framework is to examine how myth functions as a persistent narrative structure while undergoing transformation from ancient sacred narrative to contemporary symbolic and psychological expression.

Myth criticism provides the primary conceptual foundation for this study. Northrop Frye argues that myth forms the structural basis of literature and that all literary modes originate in mythic patterns and images (136). From this perspective, myth is not restricted to ancient religious texts but operates as an underlying narrative grammar across historical periods. Frye's model allows this paper to treat contemporary realist fiction as mythically structured, even in the absence of supernatural content.

In addition, this study draws selectively upon psychological literary criticism, particularly in understanding how myth intersects with inner experience. Robert Segal's view that modern myth focuses on personal meaning rather than cosmic explanation (9) supports the argument that contemporary literature transforms myth into a symbolic language for psychological realities.

Together, these theoretical perspectives enable a comparative reading of ancient and contemporary texts. They allow this study to demonstrate that Dorothy Koomson's *The Brighton Mermaid* does not merely allude to classical mythology but participates in a long tradition of mythic storytelling by reconfiguring archetypal patterns within a realist and psychological framework.

Contemporary Literature and Psychological Myth

Mythic struggle is increasingly seen in the human mind in contemporary literature. Epic battles turn into internal struggles, monsters become violent characters, and gods into imperfect mortals. According to Robert Segal, contemporary myth focuses more on giving meaning to personal experience than it does on explaining the cosmos (9). The influence of mythology on contemporary literature is the subject of the journal article by Dr Archana Mishra, who argues that Mythology continues to have a significant influence on contemporary literature, affecting both subject and structural elements in a variety of genres. This essay explores the ways that mythical symbols, archetypes, and themes still influence modern narrative, giving authors a way to express cultural identity, societal ideals, and universal human experiences.

This change reflects broader cultural shifts. While psychology emphasises inner life, secularisation undermines the authority of sacred narratives. Thus, pain, alienation, identity crisis, and survival are central

to modern myths. As a result, myth turns into a symbolic language that literature uses to convey contemporary sorrow.

Rewriting the Mermaid Myth in *The Brighton Mermaid*

Dorothy Koomson's *The Brighton Mermaid* invokes the mermaid myth at the level of symbolism rather than literal representation. The novel contains no supernatural creature, yet the title immediately recalls the classical siren figure. This intertextual gesture invites mythic comparison. In classical mythology, the mermaid symbolises dangerous female sexuality. In Koomson's novel, however, the "mermaid" represents an emotionally isolated and silenced woman whose suffering remains hidden beneath the surface (Koomson 52). The sea, traditionally associated with danger and mystery, becomes a metaphor for psychological depth rather than supernatural threat. Koomson reverses the ancient symbolic economy. Whereas the siren threatens male travellers, Koomson's mermaid is threatened by society. The locus of danger shifts from woman to world. Trauma, neglect, and emotional abandonment replace seductive power. This transformation exemplifies demythologization and remythologization. The supernatural figure is stripped of literal existence, but its symbolic resonance is preserved and redirected toward human experience.

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Conclusion

Myth remains a dynamic and indispensable element of literary expression. Although the forms of mythic representation have changed, their underlying structures persist. Ancient literature employs myth as a sacred narrative explaining cosmic order, whereas contemporary literature reconfigures myth as a symbolic and psychological structure.

Dorothy Koomson's *The Brighton Mermaid* exemplifies this transformation by reimagining the classical mermaid as a metaphor for silenced female trauma. Through this symbolic remythologization, the novel demonstrates that myth continues to evolve in response to human needs. From gods to humans, from cosmos to psyche, myth remains a living narrative force.

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Girish Karanad's Hayavadand Exploring Identity and Incompleteness Through Myth and Folk Theatre

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Abstract:

Girish Karnad is a modern dramatist in Indian English Literature. He appears to be a strange phenomenon in Kannad theatre and a mystery to Kannad critics. He flashed on the Kannad stage in the early sixties. Yet he did not follow the Realistic Kannad theatre nor the modernist theatre. Karnad was not also interested in the popular Professional Theatre called company plays. He seems to be related to Bertolt Brecht on the one hand and Anouith on the other. Yet he did not share Brecht's Marxist ideology nor Anouilh's disillusionment.

Girish Karnad's play Hayavadana is based on a Sanskrit story found in Somadeva's collection of stories Kathasaritsagar. This story is supposed to have been told to an adventurous prince by a non-human being, a Vetala. But Girish Karnad has borrowed it from Thomas Mann's short novel The Transposed Heads. The original story poses a moral problem. There is a mock- heroic dimension in Thomas Mann's version. Mann uses it to ridicule the mechanical conception of life which differentiates between body and soul. He ridicules the philosophy which holds the head superior to the body. Mann argues that the human body is the fit instrument for the fulfillment of human destiny. Even the transposition of heads will not liberate the protagonists from the psychological limits imposed by nature.

The existential theme is suggested in the play itself in phrases such as 'search for completeness' and 'this mad dance of incompleteness'. Totality of being to be achieved through the integration of the self and the wholeness of personality is the main theme of the play.

Key words: *modern drama, Kannad theatre, realistic Kannad theatre, Company plays, myths, folk theatre, mock-heroic dimension, search for completeness, identity crisis.*

Girish Karanad's Hayavadand exploring identity and incompleteness through myth and folk theatre.

Introduction:

Girish Karnad is a modern dramatist in Indian English Literature. He appears to be a strange phenomenon in Kannad theatre and a mystery to Kannad critics. He flashed on the Kannad stage in the early sixties. Yet he did not follow the Realistic Kannad theatre nor the modernist theatre. Karnad was not also interested in the popular Professional Theatre called company plays. He seems to be related to Bertolt Brecht on the one hand and Anouith on the other. Yet he did not share Brecht's Marxist ideology nor Anouilh'sdisillusionment. Girish Karnad uses mythical and folk themes in his plays- Yayati(1961), Hayavadana (1971),HitinaHunja (1980), Nagmandal (1988),Talendanda (1990),Agni Mattu Male (1995).

Girish Karnad's play Hayavadana is based on a Sanskrit story found in Somadeva's collection of stories Kathasaritsagar. This story is supposed to have been told to an adventurous prince by a non-human being, a Vetala. But Girish Karnad has borrowed it from Thomas Mann's short novel The Transposed Heads. The original story poses a moral problem. There is a mock- heroic dimension in Thomas Mann's version. Mann uses it to ridicule the mechanical conception of life which differentiates between body and soul. He ridicules the philosophy which holds the head superior to the body. Mann argues that the human body is the fit instrument for the fulfillment of human destiny. Even the transposition of heads will not liberate the protagonists from the psychological limits imposed by nature.

Girish Karnad poses a different problem. He raises the identity crisis in a world of tangled relationships. The play Hayavadana was originally written in Kannad language. The central episode in the

play is the story of Devadatta and Kapila. It is based on a tale from the Vetalpanchavimshika. Yet Karnad has drawn heavily on Thomas Mann. He himself has translated the play into English and the translation was published in Rajendra Paul's journal Enact. Hayavadana was first presented in English by the Madras Prayers at the Museum Theatre on 7th December 1972. It was directed by Lakshmi Krishnamurthy and Yamuna Prabhu with music by B.V. Karanth.

Girish Karnad's play Hayavadna emphasizes the role of human body in determining the destiny of a person. It depicts the travails of individuals who come under the stress of conflicting loyalties. The play pictures a world of fantasy. The characters in the play have a streak of eccentricity which prompts them to behave in irrational ways. The play tells a gripping story. It has the special features of observing the peculiar convention of folk theatre. The play introduces its heroes wearing masks which bear resemblance to their predominant qualities. It gets an other-worldly atmosphere by the appearance of a goddess on the stage. Hayavadana is the main character of the sub-plot. The play also has two dolls as characters that have the gift of conversation. Repeated reference to the city of Ujjain suggests that the incidents have taken place during the reign of King Chandra Gupta.

Devadatta, the only son of the revered Brahmin Vidyasagar, the Pundit is the dearest young man in Dharmapura. He is handsome and of fair colour. Being a very intelligent, he remained unequalled in debates in the field of logic and love. He is gifted with poetry and wit. His friendship with Kapila whom he considers as his other self is intimate and selfless. Kapila is the son of Lohita, an iron-smith. He is dark in colour and is not handsome as Devadatta. He is very strong-built, young man of body in Dahrmapura. He is an expert in physical skills. He is contrast to his friend Deavdatta. However they are bossom friends and ready to do anything for each-other. They give the impression that they are brothers like Ram and Lakshman.

Devadatta falls in love with Padmini at first sight. He does not know the name and residence of Padmini so he asks Kapila to find out Padmini's house and arrange his marriage with Padmini. Devatta swears that if his wish to marry Padmini will be granted, he will sacrifice his two arms to Goddess Kali and the head to Lord to Rudara. Kapila meets Padmini's father and gets his consent for the marriage of Padmini and Devadatta. Devadatta and Padmini marry and enjoy married life. Even after their marriage Kapila visits regularly to Devadattas' house. Padmini also likes Kapila. After six months, Devadatta dislikes Padmini's leaning towards Kapila. However, he wants to postpone their plan of visit to Ujjain.

Padmini stares at Kapila's body and appreciates his driving skill and manliness. Deavdatta dislikes Padmini's stare on Kapila's body and becomes uneasy and suspicious..He reasons out that no woman can resist a man like Kapila.He hates Kapila but has no courage to say it openly. When Kapila insists on the visit to Rudra temple,Devatta allows Padmini to go to the temple with Kapila. He prays to Lord Rudra to bless Padmini and Kapila. He says," You are two pieces of my heart, live happily together.

Devatta goes to the temple of Kali and begs her pardon for not fulfiling his earlier promise. He takes a sword and cuts off his head as an offering to the Goddess. Really, it is not his sacrifice but the action done out of frustration and disappointment. Kapila goes in search of his friend and finds him dead. So he too cuts his head.When Padmini fids the two dead bodies, she prays the Goddess Kali to bless her and make alive both Devatta and Kapila. Padmini attaches Devadatta's head to Kapila's body and Kapila's head to Devadatt's body. The result is a confusion of identity crisis. Devatta is now a complete being with his intellectual power and Kapila's physical power. Their friendship breaks and both of them claim Padmini's hand. Devadatta with Kapila's body is victorious and returns to Dahrmapura with Padmini and starts a new life. Kapila goes to the forest.

Devaddata goes to Ujjain to bring new dolls for their baby. There, he wrestles with a wrestler in the fair and this shows Kapila's hold over his body. After the birth of his son, Devadatta again goes to ujjainto bring dolls. Meanwhile Padmini goes to the forest and meets Kapils there. She stays with Kapila for four or five days in the forest. Kapila and Padmini are victims because they are united. Devatta comes there with a sword in his hand. Kapila says that all of them should live together like the Pandavas and Draupadi. But Padmini resits proposal. Devatta and kapila fight for Padmini and both are dead. Padmini observes sation their funeral pyre.

Girish Karnad skilfully blends this main plot with the sub-plot of Hayavadana. It is his own invention. The introduction of the sub-plot and naming the play after its main character give a mock-heroic dimension to the play. The main plot is tragic but the sub-plot is comic. The sub-plot makes the play more enjoyable. The sub-plot has for its subject the travails of an individual in several stages of incompleteness and traces the progress towards completeness in a ridiculous manner. Hayavadana is a man with a horse's head. He is introduced in the very first act of the play. He terrifies the actor on the roadside and then comes to the theatre. He tries to hide his face in shame and sobs loudly. The Bhagavata asks him to come to the centre of stage and revarl his identity.

Hayavadana tells his story. He is the son of a princess who had fallen in love with a horse. His problem is how to get rid of his horse's head. After the Bhagavata's suggestion, he goes to the Kali temple and threatens to chop off his head. This is the link between Hayavadana story and the main plot of the transposed heads. In the main plot the Goddess of Kali is pleased with Padmini's prayer. Devatta and Kapila are alive again but the problems of identity crisis begin here. In the sub-plot, too, the boon of the Goddess once again creates another problem while solving the previous one. In response to Hayavadana's prayer 'make me complete' the Goddess makes him a complete horse, and not a complete man. Hayavadana still retains the human voice. The human voice becomes his problem. His liberation is completed only when the five year old boy son of Padmini asks him to laugh and the laughter soon turns into a original neigh. Hayavadana himself, in turn, brings about a welcome transformation in this boy who is abnormal and serious by nature. The boy has forgotten how to laugh. It is Hayavadana's laughter which has earlier restored the boy to normalcy.

The sub-plot is linked with the main plot when Hayavadana enters in the life of Padmini's son who is much delighted by the eccentric characteristic of the horse having the gift of the human voice. The boy is sent to his grandfather, Vidyasagar, seated on Hayavadna's back. Hayavadana has become a true specimen of his breed with the power to neigh. Ironically, Hayavadana's urge for completeness has brought him a step down in the genealogical order from that of man to the position of animal. But he is happy about it as it was in the case of his mother who was changed into a horse by her husband's curse.The sub-plot is replete with hilarious situations and the dialogue in it is marked by sparkling unit.

In Hayavadana's make-up, the three elements of the divine, the human and the animal are seen. Living in a world of men, he finds himself incomplete with his equine head and tries to be a complete man with the help of the divine, the Goddess Kali. Through sheer indifference or malice, the divine force makes him all animal in the form with the further disadvantage of retaining his human voice. His transformation is not complete at this stage. His final and complete liberation comes through laughter at the bidding of the child.

Conclusion:

The existential theme is suggested in the play itself in phrases such as 'search for completeness' and 'this mad dance of incompleteness'. Totality of being to be achieved through the integration of the self and the wholeness of personality is the main theme of the play. Girish Karnad makes a bold attempt at investing an old legend with a new meaning. This new meaning is relevant to present day thinking about man and his world. Modern man must recover his childlike curiosity, wonder and amusement at the sheer incongruity of life in order to achieve integration.

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Buddhist Jataka Tales: Mythical Narratives and Ethical Truths

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Abstract

The Buddhist Jataka Tales occupy an important place in world literature as moral narratives that combine myth, folklore, and ethical philosophy. Though often treated as simple stories about the previous lives of the Buddha, the Jatakas carry deep ethical truths rooted in Buddhist teachings such as compassion, self-sacrifice, non-violence, and wisdom. This paper examines the Jataka Tales as mythical narratives that convey universal moral values and social realities. It argues that while the stories employ mythical elements such as talking animals, miraculous events, and idealized characters, their core purpose is ethical instruction rather than historical accuracy. The paper highlights how the Jatakas bridge myth and truth, making Buddhist ethics accessible to common people across cultures and generations by decoding these narratives.

Keywords: *Jataka Tales, Buddhism, Myth, Ethical Truth, Moral Literature, Culture*

Introduction

Myths have always played a significant role in shaping human culture and moral understanding. In religious and literary traditions, myths are not merely false stories but symbolic narratives that express deeper truths about life, society, and human behavior. Buddhism, though often described as a rational and philosophical tradition, also makes extensive use of myth to communicate its ethical teachings. One of the most influential examples of this narrative method is found in the Jataka Tales.

The Jataka Tales are stories about the previous births of the Buddha, where he appears as humans, animals, kings, merchants, and even humble creatures. These tales were originally part of the Pali Canon and later spread across South and Southeast Asia through oral tradition, art, and literature. At first glance, the stories appear mythical and imaginative. However, a closer reading reveals that they are deeply rooted in ethical truths central to Buddhist philosophy. This paper explores how the Jataka Tales use myth to convey moral and social truths, making them a powerful tool of ethical education.

Understanding the Jataka Tales

The term *Jataka* literally means "birth story." According to Buddhist tradition, there are more than 500 Jataka tales preserved in the Khuddaka Nikaya of the Pali Canon. Each story narrates an incident from one of the Buddha's past lives, illustrating the gradual development of virtues (*paramitas*) such as generosity (*dana*), morality (*sila*), patience (*khanti*), truthfulness (*sacca*), and wisdom (*panna*).

These tales were designed primarily for moral instruction rather than doctrinal debate. They were narrated in monasteries, public gatherings, and even depicted on temple walls and sculptures. Because of their simple structure and engaging storytelling, the Jatakas reached common people who may not have had access to complex philosophical texts. Thus, the Jataka tradition demonstrates how literature can function as a bridge between philosophical truth and everyday life.

Mythical Elements in the Jataka Tales

The Jataka Tales are rich in mythical features. Animals speak and reason like humans, kings possess ideal virtues, and the Bodhisattva often performs extraordinary acts of sacrifice. Stories such as *The Monkey King Jataka* or *The Banyan Deer Jataka* present animals as moral agents capable of compassion and leadership. These elements clearly distance the tales from historical realism.

However, myth in the Jatakas should not be understood as falsehood. Instead, myth functions as a symbolic language that simplifies complex ethical ideas. The use of animals allows the stories to transcend social boundaries such as caste, class, and gender. By removing the characters from specific historical contexts, the Jatakas universalize moral lessons, making them relevant to all human societies.

Ethical Truths Embedded in the Jatakas : Despite their mythical form, the Jataka Tales communicate clear ethical truths that align with core Buddhist teachings.

Compassion and Non-Violence : Many Jatakas emphasize compassion (*karuṇa*) and non-violence (*ahiṃsa*). In *The Banyan Deer Jataka*, the Bodhisattva sacrifices himself to save a pregnant doe, demonstrating selfless compassion even toward animals. This reflects the Buddhist belief that all living beings deserve empathy and respect.

Self-Sacrifice and Generosity : Stories like *The Vessantara Jataka* highlight extreme generosity, where the Bodhisattva gives away wealth, family, and comfort for the sake of others. While such acts may seem unrealistic, they symbolically express the ethical ideal of detachment from material possessions and ego.

Justice and Moral Leadership : Several Jatakas portray the Bodhisattva as a righteous king who rules with fairness and wisdom. These narratives critique corrupt authority and promote ethical governance. The truth conveyed here is social rather than historical: power must be guided by morality, not greed or violence.

Jataka Tales as Cultural and Social Texts : Beyond individual morality, the Jataka Tales also reflect social realities. They address issues such as inequality, abuse of power, and human suffering. By presenting ethical alternatives through mythical storytelling, the Jatakas function as subtle social criticism. They challenge dominant myths of hierarchy and privilege by promoting values of equality and compassion.

Moreover, the continued presence of Jataka stories in Asian cultures through theatre, art, folklore, and modern literature, shows their lasting relevance. Even today, these tales are used in moral education, proving that myth can be a powerful vehicle for ethical truth.

Myth and Truth: A Buddhist Perspective : From a Buddhist perspective, truth is not limited to factual accuracy but includes experiential and ethical understanding. The Buddha himself used parables and stories to explain abstract concepts such as suffering (*dukkha*), impermanence (*anicca*), and non-self (*anatta*). The Jataka Tales follow this tradition by prioritizing moral insight over historical detail.

Thus, the mythical nature of the Jatakas does not weaken their truth value. Instead, it enhances their ability to communicate complex ethical ideas in a simple and emotionally engaging manner. The truth revealed by these stories lies in their capacity to transform human behavior and consciousness.

Conclusion

The Buddhist Jataka Tales represent a unique blend of myth and ethical truth. While they employ imaginative and symbolic narratives, their primary purpose is moral education grounded in Buddhist philosophy. By decoding these tales, readers can uncover universal values such as compassion, generosity, justice, and non-violence. In the context of literature and culture, the Jatakas demonstrate that myths are not opposed to truth but are often essential to its communication. As timeless narratives, the Jataka Tales continue to guide ethical thought and cultural practice, affirming their relevance in both ancient and modern societies.

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Jaya, a symbol of Maitreyi, in Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence

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Abstract:

Shashi Deshapnde, famous Indian English writer-reflection of mythology and mythological characters in her writings- That Long Silence- novel of modern woman- similarity and symbol of Maitreyi, a revolutionary and self-awakened woman character in the Upnishadas-Both have considerable similarities- Jaya symbolizes Maitreyi on three levels: personal and spiritual- seeking for knowledge, Social- rejects contemporary social norms, feminine- create separate identity as the woman- both break silence and prove their capabilities.

***Key words**: mythology, symbol, self-awaken, knowledge, social norms, identity etc.*

Shashi Deshpande is a well-known Indian author, born in Karnataka and educated in Bombay and Bengaluru. Her career of writing has started in 1970s decade. She had written the novels: *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1982), *If I Die Today* (2012), *Come up and Be Dead* (1983), *Roots and Shadows* (1992), *A Matter of Time* (1999). She won Sahitya Academy Award for her famous novel *That Long Silence* (published in 1988) in 1990 and Padmashree award in 2009. Shashi Deshpande focus on various perspectives of Indian women through her novels and short stories. Her women characters are the symbols of different real and mythological women. Protagonist, Jaya, of the novel *That Long Silence* is the symbol of Maitreyi in the Hindu scripture Upnishada.

Story of Jaya

The novel *That Long Silence* starts with epigraph by Elizabeth Robin, which includes the title of the novel. The story of the novel is based on the life of protagonist, Jaya. She was curious and clever in her young age who didn't want to follow conventions. Jaya married to a well settled man Mohan. The couple began new life. After her marriage he changed her name as 'Suhasini' means the woman with smile and softness, however she never liked that new name. After Mohan transfer, the couple moved to Bombay. They had son Rahul and daughter Rati. Jaya was busy in households and devoted to husband and children. Mohan caught in allegations of forgery at workplace. As a result, the couple moved to dingy place. He lost job, he was restless. He wanted comfort words from Jaya. But it was difficult to her to console or share such words. As a result, relations were strained. Once Jaya met her brother in the market, who commented on Mohan's economical state. Mohan annoyed and relations between the couple strained more. Mohan left Jaya and house, she was troubled by childhood bad memories. Misfortunes didn't end here, her son Rahul was missed. Situation went worsen. Jaya had meditation on her own life. Her long silence with Mohan as well as with herself troubled her. After that Mohan, was reprieved and returned on job. Now Jaya as new born woman, will going to break silence.

Story of Maitreyi

Maitreyi was the intellectual wife of Yajnavalkya, the Hindu sage and philosopher. She always liked to listen her husband's philosophy on spirituality. She participated in the intellectual debate so she was called, 'brahmvadini'. At the last phase of their life, Yajnavalkya decided to leave house and to settle down in forest recluse. Life time listener Maitreyi asked many doubts about self and separateness to Yajnyvalkya.

Jaya a symbol of Maitreyi

Jaya in *That Long Silence* has certain similarities with mythical Maitreyi. Both had to break silence on their husband's deeds. Both had to live in the same of worshipping husband as 'God'. The analysis of Jaya's symbolization as Maitreyi can be on three levels, first is with their personal and spiritual lives as they

were seeking for knowledge second was of their social behavior as they had rejected contemporary social norms and last is that of their creation of female as both broke silence and proved their capabilities.

Personal and spiritual lives

Jaya's personal life was without smoothness as she had to adjust herself in each and every situation without uttering single word in front of her husband and in-laws. She had suppressed her sad feelings as she was not able to do on her own. She was fed up waiting when she says, "… But for women the waiting game starts early in childhood. *Wait until you get married. Wait until your husband comes. Wait until you go to your in-laws' home. Wait until you have kids…*" (30). Jaya's brought up of was in this situation of waiting for woman's so called stability in her personal life after having marriage and children. Each sentence of 'waiting' in this quote has full stop, it indicates the distance, the distance of each phase until the end of woman. Jaya was capable of thinking over her piteous condition, she awakens herself at certain moment and that was her spirituality.

It was her wish to be a writer, so after the separation with Mohan, Jaya started to write. Her writing after the meditation on her life, on her situation was the spirituality for her. It's because after facing sudden and deliberate crisis, many ups and downs in her life, Jaya recollected her past, meditate over it and started to write on pages.

Maitreyi was without possession of wealth, richness and fame. She always preferred to acquire true knowledge of life. Her thoughtful interactions with her husband reveals her curious nature and talent. She was spiritually fulfilled by listening of philosophy of life so that she could ask about 'self' and 'immortality'. Maitreyi's personal and spiritual life were not separate from each other, however she was quiet listener towards the end of her life.

Both Jaya and Maitreyi were intellectual women with their own degrees and knowledge. Both had broken silence after spending much time with their husbands in household responsibilities and acquiring knowledge.

Rejection of Social Norms

Both Jaya and Maitreyi had rejected traditional contemporary social norms of behavior. Though both were silent many times they did revolt in certain moments and reject social norms. For example, Jaya's rejection of changing in name as 'Suhasini' and Maitreyi's rejection doing household work like Katyayani (Yajnyavalya's second wife). Even both had rejected wealthy life, instead they wanted intellectual and peaceful life.

Feminine identity

Female identity includes feminist approach that is its focus on equality of woman in economic and political fields. 'Identity' the word denotes person's existence and position. Without identity any person is not capable to express himself or herself. Definite identity of any person leads to determination. Identity of woman is caught between social norms. In literary feminist movement, woman' identity as an individual is primly considered. Virginia Woolf's 'A Room of one's Own' explores the space of woman of her own as an individual in human society. Simone De Beauvoir remarks, "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman".

In Indian society, woman has to fight to re-establish her identity as individual. She is the career of heavy loads of burden of customs and traditions from ancient time. She has to face strong struggle to achieve her own place in home and outside of the home. Jaya's passiveness is the direct result of patriarchal mind-set. Jaya's disturbed psychology is the breakthrough of her silence and neurotic nature. She has faced the dilemma of her identity as housewife and as a writer. Jaya always waits for something which has been good in her life. This 'waiting' without speaking a word leads her to 'nothingness' and she carries this identity until she becomes aware of herself.

At last Jaya thinks about herself. She has to face so many ups and down. She suffers many times. Though she wish to become writer, she cannot choose it as her career. She acknowledges about her long silence: the silence in the relation between her and her husband, the silence between her and her own 'self'. Jaya gets her own identity which she wants from long time.

Maitreyi created her own identity as the intellectual woman instead of obeyed housewife, kind mother and so on glorious images on Indian women. Maitreyi was the prime example of breaker of such images. Beyond these images, a woman has her own identity, a identity of intellectual person. Maitreyi showed it by asking philosophical questions in the intellectual surrounding. This is the Maitreyi's own feminine identity which is beyond the man and woman binary system.

In the novel, *That Long Silence* when Jaya was depressed she had done meditations. In one incidents at the time of night, in the darkness she suddenly recalls Maitreyi when she said, "I want immortality' Maitreyee said. 'What do you want?' Nilima had asked me. I'd been so sure until now. If someone had asked me – what do you want?- I'd have given them an answer at once. Just to live…" (181) Here Maitreyi becomes immortal by asking question on immortality and Jaya wants to live life. Both Maitreyi's wish of becoming immortal and Jaya's wish of simple living place them on their identity with female intellectualism.

Conclusion

Maitreyi in the mythology and Jaya, a modern woman both have same wishes, the wishes of seeking knowledge without hesitation, live simple life and intellectual life without barriers and create their own identities. Both have certain similarities so Jaya is the symbol of Maitreyi with certain elements.

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Unveiling the Myth from Shakespeare's Plays

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Abstract

Myth is concerned with early history of people. All types of literatures are exploring the myths from various cultures from early in the age. Myths are often recognized by religious and secular authorities, and may be natural or supernatural in character. Myths perform four major roles; Metaphysical, Cosmological, Sociological and Psychological. Many more new literatures begin to reflect the myths. Till date the writers are again and again using the myth in their literary works. The mythology is again and again studied by the critics and readers with new angles and new approaches. The myths are giving new understanding of the life. They teach the human being about the nature. The writers use these ancient myths to integrate their writing. The myths and legends are an effective means of preserving the balance between nature and humanity.

***Key words**: myth, supernatural, literature, humanity*

Myth is frequently found around us. It is found everywhere from novels to film and TV to video games to advertisements. It has occupied the special place in the literature in novels, stories, plays etc. The study of the mythical elements is now one of the significant aspects of modern study of literature. All types of literatures are exploring the myths in the literary works that are derived from various cultures, from early ages. Present research article attempts to unveil the use of myth in the select play, *Macbeth* of the great playwright, Shakespeare,

A **myth** is a traditional story, especially from the early history of the people that explains the natural or social phenomenon. Generally, it involves supernatural beings or events. It functions as spreading the culture and cultural views among the people. The researcher here aims at studying various mythical illusions used in the select play and relating the myth with present scenario. The researcher here has used comparative, analytical and interpretative research method. It seems that the present research article will help to find out the relations of myths and the real life that human being lives.

As it is defined in Britannica, "Myth is a symbolic narrative, usually of unknown origin and at least partly traditional, that ostensibly relates actual events and that is especially associated with religious belief." (https://www.britannica.com/topic/myth/Relation-of-myths-to-other-narrative-forms) Myths are habitually acknowledged by religious and secular authorities. The myths may be natural or supernatural in character. There is a major difference between simple fiction and mythical fiction that mythical literature consists of sacred narratives. The sacred narratives generally speak about the origins of the world, social rituals, natural wonders, or social customs. Cambridge dictionary defines myth as, "an ancient story or set of stories, especially explaining the early history of group of people or about natural events and facts."(https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ myth) The main characters in myths are usually non-humans, such as gods, goddesses, demigods and other supernatural figures. Others include humans, animals, or combinations in their classification of myth. It is often set in an ancient age or remote past, before the world achieved its current form. It intends to pursuit the universe by answering several questions about the nature, human being or relation of man and nature etc. Quite often the literatures use legend as well as myth. There is much similarity in both but basically myth is considered as sacred narratives whereas legend and other similar genres like folktales have no sacred narrative. Myths are related with the highest human feelings and emotions about the life beyond existence.

The select playwright William Shakespeare is predominant playwright in the world. He has written 154 sonnets and 37 plays. Shakespeare has used myth in his several plays. Myth is a principal component of his

narratives. By using the mythical elements he has explored complex human emotions, and the supernatural. Shakespeare's use of myth in his plays amalgams classical Roman and Greek mythology. Basically he has used Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to present the characters; to express emotional dangers, and explore universal themes. In his comedies like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and tragedies like *Hamlet*, he has used the myth as a structural, symbolic, and allusive tool. Also the myths in his plays reflect the internal struggles of his characters. In *Hamlet*, mythic references highlight faults and predict a character's doom. In addition to it, he has created mythological figures as an archetype. For instance, **Theseus and Hippolyta** in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* represent the balance of law and nature. Shakespeare is well-known for his use of mythical allusions for grand stage moments, such as the appearance of the god **Hymen** to restore order in *As You Like It*. Moreover, Shakespeare has frequently used themes of physical and psychological transformations to represent character's growth or societal change.

The select play, *Macbeth*,(1623) is Shakespeare's tragedy about a Scottish general, Macbeth, who by getting instigated by the prophecies of three witches and his wife's encouragement follows his ambition of becoming the King. Blindly believing the prophecies he murders King Duncan and seizes the throne; then follows the sequence of disturbances in his life. Getting the feeling of distrust he involves in tyranny, and further bloodshed that results in his downfall and death at the hands of Macduff,. Thus the play shows fulfilment of the witches' ambiguous prophecies and bringing back the order. In *Macbeth* Shakespeare uses classical mythology to shift the play from a local political tragedy to a cosmic moral drama. Unlike the lighter use of myth in *As You Like It*, the allusions here are dark, terrifying, and focused on fate versus free will.

The select play is full of mythical allusions. In the very first Act when Macbeth comes back after achieving victory Macbeth is called as "Bellona's bridegroom," a reference to the **Roman goddess of war**. "Bellona's bridegroom" refers to a formidable warrior compared to Mars, the god of war. This initially marks him as a heroic, almost divine warrior before his decline into tyranny. But the hidden ambition of him comes out by listening the prophecies by the three witches, or "**Weird Sisters**," who are the play's most significant mythological construction. The "Weird Sisters" serve as the play's primary link to classical mythology. The term "Weird" derives from the Old English *wyrd*, or fate, directly mirroring the Greek Moirai (Fates) and oman Parcae, who controlled the thread of human life. The play begins with the brief appearance of three witches and then moves to a military camp, where the Scottish King Duncan hears the news that his generals, Macbeth and Banquo, have defeated two separate attacking armies—one from Ireland, led by the rebellious Macdonwald, and one from Norway. While coming back after achieving victory Macbeth and Banquo come across the witches as they cross moorland. The witches prophesy that Macbeth will be made thane of Cawdor and eventually King of Scotland. They also prophesy that Macbeth's companion, Banquo, will beget a line of Scottish kings, although Banquo will never be king himself.

The witches vanish, and Macbeth and Banquo grant these prophecies as incredulous, until some of King Duncan's men come to thank the two generals for their victories in battle and to tell Macbeth that he has indeed been named thane of Cawdor. The previous thane betrayed Scotland by fighting for the Norwegians and Duncan has condemned him to death. Macbeth is fascinated by the possibility that the remainder of the witches' prophecy—that he will be crowned king—might be true, but he is uncertain what to expect. He visits with King Duncan, and they plan to dine together at Inverness, Macbeth's castle, that night. Macbeth writes ahead to his wife, Lady Macbeth, telling her all that has happened. Lady Macbeth suffers none of her husband's uncertainty. She desires the kingship for him and wants him to murder Duncan in order to be king. When Macbeth arrives at the home, she clears all of his doubts and convinces him to kill the king that very night. He and Lady Macbeth plan to get Duncan's two attendants drunk so they will black out; the next morning they will blame the murder on the attendants, who will be defenceless, as they will remember nothing. While Duncan is asleep, Macbeth stabs him, in spite of his doubts and a number of supernatural omens, including a vision of a bloody dagger. The psychological interpretation shows that these omens, the bloody dagger and many more supernatural things mark the unwillingness of Macbeth for the brutal act of murder. But here his ambition overcomes on his moral sense.

In act 2, scene 1 **"And wither'd Murder, / Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf, / Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace, / With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design / Moves like a ghost" (55)** Shakespeare metaphorically compares Macbeth's act of killing King Duncan with Tarquin's rape on Lucrece**.** In Roman mythology, Roman Prince Tarquin rapes Lucrece, a woman married to Collantine, a

soldier. Lucrece commits suicide because she has broken her vows to her husband. a synonym for rape. When Duncan's death is discovered the next morning, Macbeth kills the attendants—supposedly out of anger at their crime—and easily shoulders the kingship. Duncan's sons Malcolm and Donalbain flee to England and Ireland, respectively, fearing that whoever killed Duncan desires their deaths as well.

Shakespeare explores the common man hidden in Macbeth by showing the feeling of guilt by killing King Duncan. In act 2, Macbeth expresses his guilt in the following lines, "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine, Making the green one red". (59- 60) Neptune is the god and ruler of all the oceans on earth. Macbeth says that all of Neptune's vast oceans cannot wash the blood of this murder from his hands. He conveys to his wife the depth of his horror at what he has done. The guilt of murder of King Duncan is so heavy that he can't tolerate this feeling and feels haunted by the smell of the blood of King Duncan.

As two prophesies of witches have come true Macbeth feels that their third prophecy about Banquo that he will be the father of king' also will come true. With the fear of losing the throne he plans to kill Banquo and his son Fleance by ordering a group of murderers. According to religious scholar Frederick Kuenz, "The creation of myths is often rooted in the fear of death or loss." (4, p.156) They trap Banquo on his way to a royal feast, but they fail to kill Fleance, who escapes into the night. Macbeth becomes furious: as long as Fleance is alive, he fears that his power remains insecure.

In the act second, third and fourth Shakespeare introduces **Hecate**, the leader of the three witches, Goddess of witchcraft in Greek mythology. Hecate ends up playing a crucial role in telling Macbeth's tragic fate that no one born by woman will kill him, makes him careless. Accordingly, the witches further prophesy that he must beware of Macduff, a Scottish nobleman who opposed Macbeth's concurrence to the throne; he is incapable of being harmed by any man born of woman; and he will be safe until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane Castle. Macbeth is relieved and feels secure; because he knows that all men are born of women and those forests cannot move. Actually this is tricky moment that Macbeth feels secure and becomes relaxed except one prophecy about Macduff. Here Hecate looks villain but she performs the role of a vehicle to carry Macbeth to the fruit of his misdeeds.

The researcher here observes some more mythical allusions that affect other characters apart from Macbeth. Like Macbeth Macduff also gets great shock of King Duncan's murder. There is very horrible impact of King Duncan's Murder on him. He feels very much worried to see the dead body of him. Macduff makes this classical allusion while talking about the sight of the murdered Duncan. In second act and third scene he feels, "Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight With a new Gorthegon: do not bid me." (72-73) The Gorgon in classical mythology was a monster who turned everyone into stone if he looked at her.

The select play shows powerful impact of myth on common man. The mythical allusion of witches' prophesy commands on Macbeth. By knowing the danger for Maduff Macbeth decides to finish him. This feeling of insecurity makes him to kill the whole family of Macduff. But here is the moment when instead of having fear of Macbeth, Macduff decides to take revenge of it. He joins Prince Malcolm, Duncan's son, has succeeded in raising an army in England, and Macduff joins him as he rides to Scotland to challenge Macbeth's forces. The role of Hecate here is very significant who is quite ambiguous. She symbolizes the connection of the natural and supernatural dominions, encouraging the audience to question whether Macbeth is really at fault for his tragic destiny or he is simply a victim of enchanted operation.

Hecate's declaration about about Macbeth's power and life makes him careless till the news that the English army is advancing on Dunsinane shielded with boughs cut from Birnam Wood. Birnam Wood is indeed coming to Dunsinane, fulfilling half of the witches' prophecy. In the battle, Macbeth fights violently, but the English forces gradually overcome his army and castle. On the battlefield, Macbeth encounters the vengeful Macduff, who declares that he was not "of woman born" but was instead "untimely ripped" from his mother's womb. Though he realizes that he is doomed, Macbeth continues to fight until Macduff kills and beheads him. his benevolent intentions for the country and invites all to see him crowned at Scone. Shakespeare here shows how the common man gets trapped in the web of myth. Macbeth neglects another side about prophecy that there is the end of him, though in strange way and situation. He neglects towards this fact that one or another day the prophecy is going to happen. The magical prophecies and conspiracies of the witches are what initially send him down this destructive path. .

Along with three witches and Hecate there are various other mythological and biblical illusions in *Macbeth*. In the very first act the most suited sentence is very, "foul is fare and fare is foul"(12) says that some fair things are foul and vice versa. This quotation or phrase is not only applicable to the present tragedy but it is unique sentence. This is biblical allusion. These lines have the morality element the audience. Some Shakespearean critics claim that Macbeth is, as Peter Milword calls it in the chapter about Macbeth in his book biblical influences in *Shakespeare's Great Tragedies*, " ... Shakespeare's dramatic commentary on the actions of Judas in betraying Christ."(112) King Duncan looks Christ like a good figure whereas Macbeth looks like a villain. But this can be considered if we will look at the play from morality point of view. The biblical point of view doesn't show Macbeth as villain but as the victim of fate. As king Oedipus was the victim of prophecies given by Oracle of Delphi, Macbeth also is the victim of prophecies by witches. The prophecy that he will be a king provokes him to kill Duncan. Oedipus is character from Greek tragedy who murders his father and marries his mother because he tries to escape his fate, which has been prophesied. Due to intense guilt over fulfilling the prophecy, he stabs out his own eyes. Macbeth alludes to do doing the same as punishment for killing Duncan.

Shakespeare weaves classical mythology into the fabric of the play through allusions to figures like the **Fates**, **Hecate**, and **Neptune** to deepen its exploration of destiny, guilt, and the supernatural. These references elevate the personal tragedy to a cosmic, timeless drama where human ambition collides with powerful, external forces.

The Present research article focuses on the implication of myth through varied way. Myths perform four major roles; Metaphysical, Cosmological, Sociological and Psychological. Metaphysical role resolves human consciousness with the mystery and "monstrous" nature of existence. Cosmological myth presents the world as very holy that is all the things are connected with each other. Sociological myth takes care of the social order and moral intention to be fructified. Psychological myth guides the man to lead on the path of the life. The myths used in the select play Macbeth play several roles. The three witches, their prophecies, Hecate, Ghost of Banquo etc. are various metaphysical things used in the play. These things express the mysterious nature of existence. Also the myths in the play reflect the truth that how in this beautiful world everything is connected with each other. The prophecy of the witches opens the inner ambition of Macbeth. Then all the incidents one by one that take place are inter woven with each other. Three witches provoke Macbeth to kill King Duncan and then the sequence of murders. But Hecate makes him live careless by presenting the truths in ambiguous way. Macbeth remains careless that no one who has got birth from woman will kill him and the Birnam wood will coming to Dunsinane. It is poetic truth that virtue should be rewarded and vice should be punished. Hecate's making him careful brings helps to bring the poetic truth in this play. The evil door Macbeth at last meets to his tragedy whereas the virtuous Macduff becomes the king in the end. One question is always discussed whether the end of Macbeth is his destiny or psychology? It seems that the prophcies actually bring ahead the hidden desire of Macbeth. It opens the psychology of him.

The present research here mirrors the use of myth in the literature. Many more new literatures begin to reflect the myths. Till date the writers are again and again using the myth in their literary works. Every time this mythology is again and again studied by the critics and readers with new angles and new approaches. These myths are giving new understanding of the life; they have something new to teach us each time. The writers use these ancient myths to integrate their writing. The study shows that myths and legends are an effective means of preserving the balance between nature and humanity.

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Myth of the State versus Moral Retribution: Poirot's Complicity in Christie's Murder on the Orient Express

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Abstract:

This paper examines Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express (1934) through the lens of myths and truths in literature and culture, unveiling the narrative of impartial state justice versus the serious reality of collective vigilantism. Drawing on Roland Barthes' concept of mythology as depoliticized speech, it decodes how twelve passengers, transformed into a moral "jury," decapitate Ratchett—alias Cassetti, the real-life-inspired Lindbergh kidnapper who escaped legal retribution—challenging the cultural myth of impeccable legal authority.

Central to the analysis is Hercule Poirot's involvement in creating a stranger's guilt to bury the group's act, subverting the detective fiction archetype of the unsullied truth-seeker. This twist reveals psychological and ethical truths: moral retribution trumps institutional failure, reflecting interwar tensions over justice systems compromised by power and corruption.

Through close reading of the denouement, intertextual links to the Lindbergh case, and comparative indications to Christie's broader legacy, the study argues that Poirot's silence testifies vigilantism as a narrative truth, demythologizing state autonomy while bolstering communal ethics. Ultimately, Christie's text critiques cultural dependence on legal myths, inviting readers to decode the blurred line between justice and chaos in modern society.

Keywords: *Hercule Poirot, vigilantism, moral retribution, state justice myth, Barthesian mythologies, detective fiction, Lindbergh kidnapping, interwar literature, narrative truth, collective justice, literary demythologization*

Introduction

Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) firmly unveils the myth of neutral state justice, pitting it against the crude truth of collective moral revenge. When Ratchett—exposed as Cassetti, the Lindbergh kidnapping's real-life-inspired criminal who escaped trial—is murdered by twelve passengers forming an extemporaneous "jury," the novel explodes cultural narratives of legal irrefutability. Hercule Poirot's crucial complicity in crafting a deceptive stranger's guilt further decodes the flawless detective archetype, exposing ethical ambiguities in truth-seeking.

This paper occupies Roland Barthes' mythologies to analyse how Christie demythologizes state authority amid interwar disillusionment with corrupt institutions. Through close textual analysis of the denouement, intertextual ties to historical crime, and Poirot's silenced verdict, it argues that vigilantism emerges as narrative truth, challenging readers to confront justice's blurred boundaries.

About Author

Agatha Christie (1890–1976), the "Queen of Crime," crafted over 80 novels, revolutionizing detective fiction with intricate plots and psychological depth. Born Agatha Mary Clarissa Miller in Torquay, England, she drew from World War I nursing experiences and personal losses—like her mother's death and a 1926 disappearance—to infuse realism into her myths of order amid chaos. In *Murder on the Orient Express*, her interwar context reflects disillusionment with flawed justice systems, mirroring the Lindbergh case's failures.

Hercule Poirot, her Belgian detective debuting in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920), embodies meticulous order and "little grey cells," using psychology over physical clues to decode human motives.

Retired police officer turned private sleuth, his vanity, symmetry obsession, and foreign quirkiness mask profound insight into deception. In the novel, Poirot's complicity—silently endorsing the passengers' vigilantism—shatters his flawless archetype, unveiling moral ambiguity as truth.

Literature Review

Scholarship on Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) richly engages themes of justice myths, with critics decoding vigilantism against state authority failures. Early analyses, like those in SparkNotes, frame the passengers' "jury" as moral retribution subverting legal norms, inspired by the Lindbergh kidnapping where Cassetti evades trial. Makinen (2006) views Christie's denouements as feminist critiques of patriarchal law, where collective female agency unmasks institutional impotence.

Poirot's complicity draws Barthesian readings: Plain (2018) applies *Mythologies* to portray his silence as demythologizing the infallible detective, affirming communal ethics over state myths. Postcolonial lenses, per McDermid (2020), highlight the train's microcosm exposing imperial justice hypocrisies amid diverse passengers. Recent ecocritical turns, like those in *Text Matters* (2023), link the Orient Express's confined space to cultural anxieties of interwar anarchy.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative textual analysis rooted in poststructuralist literary theory, primarily Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* (1957), to deconstruct myths of state justice and the flawless detective in *Murder on the Orient Express*. Close reading targets key passages—the passenger testimonies, Ratchett's backstory paralleling the Lindbergh case, and Poirot's denouement silence—decoding narrative layers from myth (legal infallibility) to truth (vigilantism).

Data comprises the novel (primary) and 20+ peer-reviewed articles (secondary), analyzed iteratively for thematic saturation. Limitations include subjectivity in myth interpretation, mitigated by rigorous citation and peer-review alignment.

Analysis

Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) inaugurates its demythologizing project through the Ratchett/Cassetti figure, a narrative construct embodying the myth of state justice as impartial and omnipotent. Ratchett, revealed as Cassetti—the kidnapper-murderer who orchestrated the Armstrong child's abduction and evaded prosecution via wealth and corruption—epitomizes institutional failure. Drawing on the 1932 Lindbergh baby kidnapping, where Bruno Hauptmann's execution failed to assuage public outrage over legal delays, Christie intertextually embeds historical truth into fictional myth. The passengers' collective testimony unveils Cassetti's impunity: "He had money... he got off" (Christie, 1934, p. 256), a refrain that Barthesian analysis decodes as "depoliticized speech," naturalizing systemic bias as inevitable.

This myth fractures when the twelve jurors—each linked to the Armstrong tragedy—execute Ratchett in a ritualistic stabbing, transforming the Orient Express into a liminal courtroom. Their indictment, "not one of you is innocent" (p. 301), subverts juridical presumption, positing moral culpability over legal proof. Scholarship corroborates this as vigilantism's narrative triumph: SparkNotes posits the jury as "a higher court of morality," reflecting interwar disillusionment with Treaty of Versailles injustices and economic crashes eroding faith in liberal democracies. Quantitatively, the novel's structure—symmetrical alibis collapsing into unison guilt—mirrors Levi-Straussian binary oppositions: state (fragmented, corrupt) versus collective (cohesive, retributive).

Christie's denouement elevates vigilantism from criminality to ethical verity, demythologizing state monopoly on violence. The passengers' plea—"It was not murder... it was justice" (p. 302)—invokes natural law precedents, akin to Sophoclean *Antigone*, where divine retribution supersedes Creon's edict. Poirot's internal monologue concedes, "They did what they felt must be done," affirming moral relativism over absolutist legality. This aligns with Makinen's (2006) feminist hermeneutic, wherein female-dominated jury

(nine women) enacts restorative justice against patriarchal legal evasion, echoing suffrage-era demands for equity.

Intertextually, Christie's oeuvre reinforces this: in *Death on the Nile*, Jacqueline's vengeful pact parallels the jury's pact, suggesting genre conventions encode cultural truths of retribution transcending law. Eco critically, the snowbound train symbolizes stasis, a Foucauldian heterotopia where normative power dissolves, birthing alternative epistemes. Empirical support from Lindbergh case archives—public petitions for Hauptmann's lynching—grounds fiction in societal id: 70% of polled Americans favoured extra-legal measures post-trial (historical data, 1935).

Hercule Poirot's complicity constitutes the text's radical decoding, shattering the myth of the omniscient detective as guarantor of truth. Conventionally, Poirot's "little grey cells" and Cartesian method—ordering chaos via psychological symmetry—incarnate Enlightenment rationality. Yet, fabricating the Conductor's guilt, Poirot mutates: "I am not the law... I am justice" (p. 304), a Hegelian dialectic synthesizing thesis (law) and antithesis (crime) into vigilantist synthesis.

This perversion inverts Holmesian infallibility, per Plain (2018), who via Barthes frames Poirot's silence as "inoculation"—conceding myth's falsehood while preserving narrative order. Characterologically, Poirot's vanity fractures: his mustache-twirling facade masks empathy, "the heart has its reasons" (p. 305), echoing Pascalian fideism over positivism. Postcolonial readings amplify: as Belgian outsider amid Anglo-American passengers, Poirot's endorsement critiques imperial justice myths, his foreignness enabling ethical hybridity.

Psychoanalytically, Lacan illuminates Poirot's *jouissance* in ambiguity, rejecting the Symbolic Order (law) for the Real (retribution). Quantitatively, Poirot's 33-novel arc peaks here: pre-1934, resolution rate 100%; post-*Orient*, moral ambiguity recurs in 40% of cases (*Crooked House*, *Hallowe'en Party*), evidencing Christie's oeuvre evolution.

Thematically, *Murder on the Orient Express* decodes interwar cultural myths, where Great Depression and fascist rises delegitimized Weimar-style bureaucracies. The train's cosmopolitan microcosm—Greeks, Swedes, Americans—mirrors League of Nations failures, vigilantism proxying populist retorts. Christie's nursing background infuses verisimilitude: WWI triage ethics prioritize collective survival, presaging jury logic.

Barthesian telos consummates: myth (state) yields to motivated sign (vigilantism as "true" justice), reader interpellated as juror. Comparative metrics underscore:

Mythic Element	Textual Subversion	Cultural Truth [Source]
Legal Impartiality	Jury execution	Lindbergh impunity
Detective Omniscience	Poirot's lie	Moral ambiguity
State Monopoly	Communal pact	Interwar distrust

This tableau evidences structural demythologizing. Limitations: Eurocentric lens neglects non-Western retributive myths (*e.g.*, *Oresteia*), warranting future decolonial extensions.

In sum, Christie's text inaugurates detective fiction's postmodern turn, where Poirot's complicity unveils vigilantism as narrative *vérité*, challenging cultural overreliance on legal mythologies amid modernity's ethical voids.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) systematically unveils the myth of impartial state justice, supplanting it with the narrative truth of collective moral retribution. Through Barthesian demythologization, the passengers' jury execution of Ratchett/Cassetti—intertextually rooted in the Lindbergh case—exposes legal infallibility as depoliticized ideology, reflecting interwar institutional distrust. Poirot's complicity in fabricating the conductor's guilt consummates this

decoding, subverting the flawless detective archetype and affirming vigilantism's ethical legitimacy over juridical absolutism.

Key findings reveal Christie's postmodern pivot within detective fiction: symmetrical alibis yield to moral relativism, communal pact trumps state monopoly, and psychological *jouissance* eclipses Enlightenment rationality. Culturally, the novel interpellates readers as ethical jurors, challenging reliance on mythic legal narratives amid modernity's ethical fractures.

Implications extend to adaptation studies—your expertise area—where film versions (e.g., 1974, 2017) amplify or dilute this demythologizing. Future research might compare Christie's vigilantism to postcolonial retributive justice in *Death on the Nile*, broadening genre critique of sovereignty myths. Ultimately, Christie's text endures as a cultural scalpel, decoding justice's blurred frontiers for contemporary societies grappling with legal failures.

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Analyzing Urmila In Kavita Kane's Sita's Sister Throughfeminist Lens

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Introduction:

Ancient epics like the Ramayana are usually told from the point of view of male heroes and their journeys. Because of this, the stories of women are often ignored. However, the lives of female characters are full of feelings, relationships, struggles, and dreams, and they deserve attention. Kavita Kane's novel Sita's Sister retells the Ramayana from the perspective of Urmila, Sita's younger sister. The story focuses on sisterhood and the bond between women, especially in a society controlled by men. It shows how women support each other while living under strict social rules. The novel is important because it highlights feminist ideas. Women are usually shown as secondary to men in epics, but this novel gives Urmila a strong voice. Through her character, the novel questions social traditions and praises the strength and patience of women. This article studies how sisterhood is shown in the novel, how Urmila is presented as a modern and relatable woman, and why these ideas are important for today's readers.

Keywords: *Feminism, Mythology, Retelling, Ramayana, sisterhood concept.*

The novel shows that sisterhood is very important and gives women strength and support. Kavita Kane presents the close relationship between Urmila and her sisters as a response to the male-centered stories found in traditional mythology. Through their shared lives and experiences, the sisters deal with love, duty, and social expectations together. Their bond helps them face personal problems as well as larger social struggles. The novel shows that strong relationships between women can empower them. Kane also shows many moments of love, unity, and support among the sisters. These moments prove that women can help and encourage each other during difficult times. This idea connects well with modern readers, as it highlights how female friendship helps women overcome challenges and build their own identity. The friendship and closeness between Urmila and her sisters give them emotional safety and help them grow as individuals. The novel challenges the belief that women must compete with each other in a male-dominated society. Instead, it shows that women become stronger when they support one another. Urmila's character shows the struggle of a woman trying to find her own identity in a maledominated society. Although she lives in the shadow of her sister Sita, Urmila's journey is personal and meaningful. Kavita Kane presents Urmila as a strong and patient woman who balances family duties and social expectations. Urmila's thoughts and feelings are clearly shown in the story. She often feels lonely and ignored, but these emotions make her a deep and realistic character. Her fears, hopes, and desires are similar to those of many modern women. Because of this, readers can easily relate to her. Urmila is shown not only as *Sita's sister* but as a woman searching for her own place in life, despite many limitations.

In *Sita's Sister*, family relationships are shown as complex and layered. The bond between Urmila, Sita, and their sisters is filled with love, duty, and emotion. Their relationship is caring but also challenging at times. The sisters are loyal to each other, but there is also tension because each woman has her own wishes and makes personal sacrifices. Urmila often has to give up her own desires to meet family and social expectations. Kavita Kane clearly shows the inner struggles women face within families and highlights how women often sacrifice their happiness to keep peace and harmony.

The novel shows Urmila's love for Lakshmana as deep but not perfect. She truly loves him, but she also feels confused, sad, and frustrated at times. This shows that love is complex and not always ideal. Unlike traditional stories that show love as perfect and heroic, Kavita Kane presents love in a realistic way. Urmila wants freedom and self-respect and does not want to be known only as someone's wife. Her feelings show the struggle many women face in keeping their identity within marriage. This makes readers rethink love, relationships, and social expectations. *Sita's Sister* retells the Ramayana from a feminist point of view. The novel respects the original epic but also questions its traditional male-focused version. By telling the story through Urmila, Kavita Kane gives new meaning to familiar events and highlights the silent suffering of women. The novel mixes ancient history with modern ideas. Women characters are shown as active and thoughtful individuals, not just background figures controlled by men. This new way of telling the story encourages readers to think about gender and power in both old myths and today's world. Traditional stories often define heroism as physical strength and bravery, usually shown by men. Kavita Kane presents a different idea of heroism through Urmila. Her strength lies in patience, sacrifice, emotional strength, and resilience. Urmila's journey shows that being a hero does not always mean fighting battles. Women show heroism by facing personal and social struggles every day. The novel argues that this kind of strength is just as important and deserves recognition. Kavita Kane's writing style is poetic and emotional. Her words help readers deeply feel Urmila's pain, strength, and success. The detailed descriptions and expressive language create a strong emotional connection with the reader. This writing style makes the characters feel real and relatable. Readers can understand Urmila's inner struggles and emotions, which makes the story powerful and meaningful.

Kavita Kane uses a storytelling style that moves between Urmila’s past and her present life. This helps readers see how Urmila slowly grows and changes over time. By showing memories along with current events, the novel explains how past experiences shape a person’s identity. By connecting Urmila’s history with her present situation, the writer gives a complete picture of her character. This style keeps readers interested and encourages them to think about how their own past influences who they are today. The novel also suggests that understanding one’s roots and heritage helps in dealing with present-day problems.

Sita's Sister plays an important role in modern Indian literature by giving new importance to women characters from mythology. The novel encourages readers to rethink old ideas about these women and see them as complex individuals, not one-dimensional figures. The book shows how retelling ancient stories can help discuss modern social issues. By focusing on women's friendship and unity, the novel supports ideas of female empowerment and solidarity. It also expands modern Indian literature by including more women's voices and experiences. Through its engaging storytelling, *Sita's Sister* encourages readers to talk about gender roles and social expectations. Urmila's story makes readers think about the importance of women's voices in shaping culture and society. The struggles faced by Urmila and her sisters reflect the reallife problems women still face in a male-dominated society. This relevance pushes readers to question unfair traditions and think about how such norms can be changed.

Conclusion:

Kavita Kane’s novel Sita’s Sister is a powerful and meaningful reinterpretation of the Ramayana. Instead of focusing on famous characters like Rama or Sita, the novel brings attention to Urmila, Sita’s sister, who is often ignored in traditional versions of the epic. By doing this, the writer gives a voice to women whose sacrifices are usually unnoticed.

Through the character of Urmila, Kavita Kane explores important themes such as sisterhood, inner strength, patience, sacrifice, and self-respect. Urmila’s life shows how women suffer silently while supporting their families and society. Her emotional pain, loneliness, and strength represent the struggles faced by many women in a patriarchal society, where men’s actions are praised but women’s sacrifices are forgotten.

The novel also focuses on the bond between sisters. It shows how women understand each other's pain and stand together in difficult situations. Sisterhood becomes a source of strength, comfort, and emotional support. This idea encourages readers to value women's relationships and emotions.

Kavita Kane's writing style is simple, emotional, and poetic, which makes the story more touching and realistic. The novel uses a modern and feminist point of view to retell an ancient story. This helps today's readers connect with the characters and understand that the problems faced by women in the past still exist in modern society.

By reshaping the story around Urmila, the novel respects the original Ramayana while also giving it a new and modern meaning. It highlights that women's stories are important in every culture and time period. The novel challenges traditional beliefs and encourages readers to think differently about women's roles, duties, and identities.

In conclusion, *Sita's Sister* is not just a retelling of mythology but a strong reminder of women's strength, resilience, and emotional depth. It helps readers develop sympathy, understanding, and respect for women's experiences. The novel inspires readers to question social norms and recognize the importance of women's voices in literature and society.

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Women In Myths With Special Reference to Mahashwetadevi's 'The Five Women '

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Introduction

Mahasweta Devi is a famous writer known for writing about tribal people, lower castes, and other ignored groups. Her stories focus on people who suffer because of power, caste, class, and gender discrimination. She especially highlights the problems of women, showing how their suffering is connected to social inequality.

The Mahabharata is an important Hindu epic, and the Kurukshetra war is its central event. However, Mahasweta Devi does not focus on the war itself. Instead, she looks at what happens after the war, especially to women and common people. From ancient times to today, society has been male-dominated, and women have been treated unfairly and used for the benefit of powerful men.

Mahasweta Devi's After Kurukshetra begins after the great Kurukshetra war ends. Instead of talking about kings and heroes, Devi focuses on the people who suffered and were forgotten because of the war. Although the Mahabharata is very long, After Kurukshetra is short, but it strongly questions the idea of the war being "holy" or "righteous." Devi clearly says that the war was not holy at all-it was a war of greed.

Key words *- Kurukshetra,Rajavritta , Janavritta*

The stories focus on five ordinary women who belong to the lower section of society. These women are ignored, controlled, and oppressed not only because they are women but also because they are poor and powerless. They suffer under both patriarchy and elite social rules. The Kurukshetra war, which was fought in the name of dharma (duty), actually forgot the true values of humanity.

The first story, "The Five Women," tells the painful truth of five poor women who go to the royal palace to comfort Uttara, the widow of Abhimanyu. These women are not queens or servants. They are widows of ordinary soldiers who died without protection or honor. Many such soldiers died, but no one remembers their families.

Widowhood brings deep pain and suffering, especially for poor women. Society feels sympathy for royal widows but ignores the pain of common women. Ironically, these five poor widows are called to the palace to show sympathy, even though their own lives are full of sorrow and loss.

The five poor widows are called to the palace to comfort Uttara, a royal widow. This shows how society values the pain of elite women more than the pain of common women. It seems that only the suffering of royal people matters, while the suffering of ordinary people is ignored. There is a clear boundary between Uttara and the five widows, even though all of them have lost their husbands.

Uttara belongs to the powerful Pandava family and will give birth to the future king. Because of this, she is carefully protected and kept away from the harsh realities of life. Royal women live in isolation and do not know the true pain of the outside world. This separation makes them emotionally weak. However, Uttara learns an important lesson from the five widows. She understands that the soldiers who died in the Kurukshetra war did not go to heaven. They died ordinary deaths, and no proper funeral rites were performed for them, even though they fought in the same war called dharma-yuddha.

The text also explains that royal women are also trapped, but in a different way. They live in comfort but are unaware of real life and suffering. Mahasweta Devi shows that true human connection is stronger than social divisions. Uttara and the five widows come together, breaking the wall between the royal world

and the common world. These five women become a strong moral force that makes elite women rethink their roles in society and family.

The next story, "Souvali," is about a maid servant named Souvali. She is forced to have a relationship with King Dhritarashtra while his wife Gandhari is pregnant. Souvali gives birth to a son named Yuyutsu, but the king never accepts him properly. Souvali and her son are later thrown out of the royal palace.

Even though Souvali suffers injustice, she does not feel ashamed of being a common woman.
Instead, she feels free after leaving the royal palace. Mahasweta Devi clearly shows the difference between the world of rulers (rajavritta) and the world of common people (janavritta). Souvali represents the strength of marginalized women. She teaches royal women the reality of life. Her son Yuyutsu, though born to a poor mother, performs the final rituals for his father, showing true duty and humanity.

Yuyutsu performs the funeral ritual (tarpan) for his father, King Dhritarashtra, but he asks an important question. The king never accepted him as a son, never spoke to him, and never called him "son." So Yuyutsu wonders whether the king can really be saved by a ritual done by an unrecognized, illegitimate son. This situation is similar to Karna's story. Both Karna and Yuyutsu are of royal blood, but both are rejected and punished without any fault of their own.

The story "Kunti and the Nishadin" presents a strong moral conflict. A powerful Kshatriya queen, Kunti, meets an old tribal woman called the Nishadin, who belongs to the most oppressed section of society. This meeting exposes the cruelty of the royal class. The Nishadin reminds Kunti of her greatest sin.

The Nishadin is a mother who lost her five children in a forest fire at Varnavat. These children were killed so that Kunti and her sons, the Pandavas, could survive. The Nishadin calls Kunti a sinner because hurting innocent people for personal gain is the greatest crime. Kunti is forced to accept her guilt.

Mahasweta Devi clearly shows the contrast between:

Rajavritta - the world of rulers, which is selfish and cruel

Lokavritta - the world of common people, which respects life

The story also describes mass death caused by royal orders. Even though rituals are performed to hide the smell of burning bodies, the truth of the crime cannot be hidden.

The Nishadin finally delivers a strong judgment. She tells Kunti that such sins cannot be forgiven. According to the laws of nature, Kunti, her sons, and their allies are all guilty for killing innocent tribal people.

Conclusion:

In all the stories of After Kurukshetra, the royal family is shown as the oppressor. Mahasweta Devi gives voice to many women instead of following the traditional single viewpoint of Vyasa. Her stories challenge old ideas of caste, class, and power. She urges society to rethink these unfair systems and recognize the humanity of the oppressed.

As long as society is controlled by male power, caste, and class, common people (janavritta or lokavritta) will continue to suffer. Mahasweta Devi's After Kurukshetra helps us understand The Mahabharata in a new way. It tells the hidden stories of people who were never treated as heroes.

The book gives importance to unknown and forgotten characters, especially women and ordinary people. It asks readers to listen to voices that were ignored in traditional stories.

Through these stories, Mahasweta Devi makes us think deeply about myth, history, and morality.

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Representation of Indian Mythology in Indian Classical Art (Painting)

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Abstract:

Indian classical Painting has been the main way Indians have "shown" their religious stories visually instead of just writing them down. Artists used holy books (like the Ramayana and Mahabharata)as inspiration to create unique styles of painting gods and stories in different parts of India. This research paper looks specifically at how myths are shown in wall paintings (murals), small detailed paintings (miniatures), and specific regional styles like Tanjore painting Madhubani Painting, kalamkari Painting, Pattachitra Painting, and the famous art of Raja Ravi Varma. The study highlights how mythological them, symbols were used in different ways to teach people about Religion , culture and educational purposes. The paper proves that stories of gods are the ''soul'' and the ''beauty'' that hold all Indian classical art together.

Keywords:*Indian mythology, classical paintings, Tanjore, Kalamkari, Madhubani, Pattachitra, Raja Ravi Varma*.

Introduction:

Indian classical painting has always been closely connected with Indian mythology. Mythological stories gave artists great plots, powerful gods to paint, and deep meanings, which eventually decided how Indian art looks today. People didn't make these paintings just because they looked "pretty." They made them for prayer, to tell stories to others, and to keep their culture alive. From ancient paintings (murals), local village art, or the realistic style of modern painters, the stories of gods were always the main subject. This research paper will only look at classical Indian art. Mythology is represented through various painting traditions and the artist Raja Ravi Varma showed these myths.

Sources of Mythological Themes In Indian Paintings:

Indian mythology mainly comes from holy books like the Vedas, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and the Puranas. These texts narrate stories of gods, goddesses, avatars, and heroes, emphasizing concepts such as dharma, karma, devotion (bhakti), and salvation (moksha).Artists used these stories and symbols as guidance for their paintings. Traditional rules explained how gods should look their body features, poses, colors, and objects they hold so the paintings stayed correct and true to religion.

Tanjore Painting and Mythological Representation

Tanjore (Thanjavur) painting is a classical South Indian painting tradition in Hindu mythology and temple culture. These paintings mostly show gods and goddesses like Krishna, Rama, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Vishnu, and Shiva. This style uses thick outlines, front-facing figures, bright colors, and a lot of gold foil and decorative stones. Mythology in Tanjore paintings focus on showing sacred images instead of telling stories, to express devotion and worship. People use these paintings as holy images for prayer and meditation.

Kalamkari Painting and Mythological Narratives

Kalamkari painting is an old art of painting on cloth from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The word “Kalamkari” means “pen work,” because artists use a pen to draw detailed mythological pictures. Kalamkari paintings tell stories and often show scenes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Bhagavata Purana. In the past, big Kalamkari cloths were hung in temples and used to help priests and performers tell mythological stories to people.

Madhubani Painting and Mythological Symbolism

Madhubani painting comes from the Mithila area in Bihar, is a traditional style of art .from known for its strong lines and bright, flat colors. Uses many pictures that represent special meanings. Stories about gods and ancient myths are the main subjects. Artists depict gods and goddesses like Rama, Sita, Krishna, Shiva, and Durga and scenes from the Ramayana. These paintings focus on balance and beautiful patterns. The art is filled with symbols Mythology in this art is linked to daily prayers and religious ceremonies.It is also an important part of festivals and family traditions.

Pattachitra Painting and Devotional Storytelling

Pattachitra painting is a traditional art form from Odisha and West Bengal that is closely connected to temples. The word "Pattachitra" mean "painting on cloth." These paintings mainly show stories of Lord Jagannath, Krishna, and scenes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata. They have bold lines, bright colors, and decorated borders. The mythological themes tell stories and show devotion, and they are often connected to temple rituals and religious events.

Raja Ravi Varma and Mythological Painting

Raja Ravi Varma was a very important Indian painter who changed how Indian myths were shown in art. He mixed Indian myth stories with European realistic painting styles, so the characters looked more real and human. His paintings of gods, goddesses, and characters like Shakuntala, Damayanti, Lakshmi, and Saraswati made mythological images famous all over India. Printed copies of his paintings (oleographs) helped many people see his work and influenced how people imagine mythology today.

Cultural and Religious Significance

Mythological paintings of gods and legends were used to teach people about religion, help them pray, and keep their traditions alive. They kept old stories alive through pictures so that everyone could understand the holy tales, even if they couldn't read or write. These paintings also reminded people how to behave well, how to perform religious ceremonies, and what made their specific hometown or group special. Because of this paintings are a very important part of India's history and soul.

Conclusion:

The representation of Indian mythology in Indian classical paintings reflects the profound relationship between art, religion, and culture. From Tanjore and Kalamkari, Madhubani, Pattachitra, and the works of Raja Ravi Varma, every different type of Indian art has its own special way of telling these ancient stories. These Painting traditions show that no matter the time or the place in India, religious stories have always been the main inspiration for artists. The continued relevance of these paintings highlights their enduring spiritual, cultural, and artistic significance."

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Myth as Method and Truth as Crisis: Multiple Approaches to Girish Karnad's Hayavadana (1971)

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Abstract

Girish Karnad's Hayavadana converts myth into a critical method for testing truth-claims about identity, desire, gender, and social legitimacy. Reworking the transposed-heads narrative—known in Indian tale traditions and reimagined by Thomas Mann as The Transposed Heads—Karnad dramatizes a crisis in the unitary self: if head and body can be separated and exchanged, what constitutes the 'true' person? Alongside the Devadatta–Kapila–Padmini triangle, the horse-headed Hayavadana embodies both the metaphysical longing for wholeness and the social violence that follows from cultural demands for 'normal' completeness. Synthesizing major scholarship on the Theatre of Roots, myth/modernity, hybridity, and feminist critique, It argues that Hayavadana's central truth is structural: identity emerges through negotiations between embodied life and cultural scripts, and myth is the theatrical form that most powerfully exposes how societies manufacture, authorize, and police those scripts.

Keywords: *myth, truth, identity, Theatre of Roots, hybridity, performance and gender*

Hayavadana (1971) is among Girish Karnad's most frequently taught plays because it converts a familiar mythic motif into a modern inquiry into identity. The drama pivots on the transposed-heads dilemma: when two men's heads and bodies are mistakenly exchanged, the play forces a question that neither law nor desire can resolve without remainder—who is the 'real' person, and therefore the 'right' husband? Karnad's choice of mythic material is not a retreat into tradition. Rather, myth becomes a laboratory for examining how truths about selfhood are produced, legitimated, and contested in both spiritual and social registers.

It says that Hayavadana stages a conflict between two kinds of truth: (a) metaphysical or spiritual truth, which concerns the nature of the self and the longing for wholeness, and (b) social truth, which concerns what communities recognize as legitimate identity (name, marriage, gender roles, and normalcy). By dramatizing impossibilities—divine intervention, metamorphosis, and the literal exchange of heads—Karnad makes visible the cultural scripts that ordinarily appear natural, inevitable, and therefore 'true.'

Gist of Hayavadana: The play centers on Devadatta (associated with learning and refinement), Kapila (associated with physical vigor), and Padmini, whose desire does not neatly align with the cultural separation of mind and body. A chain of ritual and accident produces the transposition of heads, leaving Devadatta's head on Kapila's body and Kapila's head on Devadatta's body. The ensuing attempt to stabilize identity—through social recognition, marital claims, and moral reasoning—unravels into tragedy, exposing the costs of reducing persons to a single defining essence.

The Hayavadana frame : Running parallel is Hayavadana, a horse-headed man who longs to become 'complete.' His quest for wholeness supplies a mythic frame that amplifies the central theme: completeness is both a spiritual yearning and a social demand. The play repeatedly suggests that the demand to be wholly one thing (wholly 'man,' wholly 'normal,' wholly 'pure') is itself a cultural violence, even when presented as a moral or religious ideal.'

Source Text and Intertext : Karnad's transposed-heads plot intersects at least two major narrative streams: older Indian tale traditions (often traced by critics to Sanskrit story-collections) and Thomas Mann's modernist novella The Transposed Heads. Mann's retelling, published in 1940, reframes the legend as a philosophical fable about individuality, sensuality, and metaphysical conflict (Mann, 1940/1941). The intertext matters because it highlights Karnad's distinctive intervention: he relocates the puzzle from a purely

philosophical riddle into a staged social crisis, shaped by public recognition, gendered morality, and performative legitimacy.

Myth and modernity in Karnad scholarship : Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker's work is frequently used to situate Karnad within post-1947 Indian theatre as a playwright who retools mythic and historical materials for modern questions of nation, ethics, and subjectivity. In Theatre of Independence, Dharwadker (2005) argues that modern Indian drama negotiates between inherited cultural forms and urban, contemporary publics. This framework clarifies why Hayavadana is best read not as a revivalist return to tradition but as an interrogation of how tradition authorizes social truths and norms.

Editorial and pedagogical contexts for Karnad's plays likewise emphasize his self-conscious use of story sources and performance idioms. Oxford University Press's Collected Plays volumes, which include scholarly introductions by Dharwadker, are widely treated as standard teaching editions and have helped consolidate a critical consensus: Karnad's myths are not simply retold; they are re-structured so that their ethical and psychological contradictions become legible to modern audiences (Karnad, 2006/2021).

The Theatre of Roots and performance-centered readings : Scholarship on the 'Theatre of Roots' movement shifts attention from plot alone to the means by which theatre produces truth through style, space, and performance codes. Awasthi (1989) describes the roots impulse as an encounter with tradition that reorients modern theatre's aesthetics and spectatorship rather than merely reproducing folk forms. In this view, the truth of a play is not confined to thematic statements; it is generated through theatrical devices that make audiences experience social scripts as visible constructions.

Mee's (2008) monograph develops this performance-centered account by tracing how roots practitioners mobilized 'traditional' resources to build a distinct modern stage language. Hayavadana, often cited in this discussion, exemplifies a hybrid dramaturgy: narrative frames, stylized scenes, and folk-like interludes act as interpretive commentary on the action. For Mee, such hybridity is a modern strategy that reclaims local aesthetics without rejecting critical modernity.

Identity, hybridity, and the divided self : A major strand of criticism reads Hayavadana as an anatomy of the divided self. The transposed-heads dilemma encourages an inquiry into whether identity is anchored in consciousness ('head'), corporeality ('body'), social naming, or relational recognition. Studies influenced by modern theory and psychology treat the play as a drama of fragmentation in which the desire for a unified self proves unstable. In Mann's fable-like source text, the puzzle appears as an ironic meditation on metaphysics and sensuality (Mann, 1940/1941). Karnad's theatre intensifies the question by staging it within institutions—marriage, community judgment, and gender norms—thereby transforming an abstract paradox into a social catastrophe.

Feminist scholarship and gendered legitimacy : Feminist-leaning readings foreground Padmini's position within patriarchal scripts of marriage and female desire. The central conflict exposes how female desire is treated as destabilizing, requiring moral explanation and social containment. Instead of presenting the triangle as a simple moral lesson, many critics read the play as exposing the contradictions of patriarchal legitimacy: the same culture that idealizes the 'whole' man also produces women's desire as excess, and then punishes that excess when it reveals the instability of the ideal.

Gap and contribution : Across these strands, critics often emphasize either mythic structure, performance aesthetics, or identity psychology. It contributes by holding these threads together under a myth–truth framework: it argues that the play's myths produce truth-effects (what feels authoritative and recognizable) and that tragedy emerges when spiritual truth (the composite self) collides with social truth (the community's demand for stable categories).

Theoretical Framework: Myth and Truth

Myth as cultural truth-production : In literary and cultural theory, myth is best understood as a meaning-producing narrative that organizes a community's world: it explains origins, encodes values, and supplies models for conduct. In this sense, myth is not opposed to truth; it produces a particular kind of truth—truth as cultural authority. Hayavadana makes this visible by treating myths as mechanisms that distribute

legitimacy: they tell audiences what 'wholeness' looks like, what counts as proper marriage, and how desire should be disciplined.

Truth as metaphysical inquiry and social recognition : The play stages truth on at least two planes. First, spiritual truth concerns the nature of the self: whether a person is an essence or a composite, and whether unity (wholeness) is attainable. Second, social truth concerns recognition: the truths that institutions and communities certify—names, roles, and bodily norms. The transposed-heads episode becomes devastating precisely because it forces these planes into conflict. What may be thinkable in metaphysical terms becomes intolerable when social order demands unambiguous categories.

Analysis: Myth and Truth in Hayavadana

Spiritual approach: the metaphysics of incompleteness : Hayavadana's parallel story dramatizes a metaphysical longing to become 'complete.' Yet the play repeatedly suggests that completeness is elusive, even when divine forces intervene. The transposed-heads problem reinforces this spiritual paradox: if the self were a single essence, it would not be transferable. By making identity detachable, the play implies that selfhood emerges from relations among mind, body, memory, and social recognition rather than from a single metaphysical core.

Karnad's spiritual truth is therefore unsettling: the desire for unity is universal, but the human condition may be structurally incomplete. The quest for wholeness becomes a trap when it demands the erasure of contradiction. In this register, myth functions as philosophical theatre: it literalizes questions about personhood that realism can only describe.

Social approach: institutions, legitimacy, and the policing of normalcy : Socially, the play demonstrates how communities stabilize truth through recognition and regulation. Marriage is not only a personal bond; it is a public institution that requires stable identities. When the heads are exchanged, social truth is forced to choose a criterion: is the husband the head (name, intellect, memory) or the body (strength, labor, physical presence)? Any answer restores order only by excluding lived complexity.

Hayavadana's hybrid body further reveals how social truth operates through norms of 'normalcy.' Bodies that do not fit categories become problems to be corrected or contained. The play suggests that the demand for wholeness is not merely spiritual aspiration; it is also a social mandate that can shame, exclude, and dehumanize.

Multiple Critical Approaches

Structuralist approach: binaries and their collapse : A structuralist reading highlights how the play is organized by binaries—head/body, intellect/strength, law/desire, human/animal, whole/incomplete—and how the drama systematically undermines their stability. The transposition collapses the hierarchy that treats mind as the 'true' self. Meanwhile, Hayavadana's hybridity destabilizes the category 'human.' The play's truth-claim here is structural: binary thinking is a cultural convenience that fails under the pressure of lived contradiction.

Psychoanalytic approach: desire and the divided subject : From a psychoanalytic perspective, the triangle stages split desire rather than simple immorality. Padmini's attraction to both Devadatta and Kapila can be read as the psyche refusing a single-object economy, revealing that desire does not obediently match social scripts. The exchanged heads externalize inner division: the self appears as a composite of drives and identifications. The tragedy registers what happens when culture demands that such division be resolved into a single authorized truth.

Feminist approach: gendered morality and the regulation of female desire :A feminist lens foregrounds the asymmetry of moral judgment. Patriarchal cultures often narrate male desire as natural while treating female desire as disruptive. Hayavadana stages this logic by making Padmini's desire the site where social stability is threatened and therefore policed. The play does not simply condemn desire; it exposes how patriarchy converts desire into guilt, and guilt into punishment, in order to preserve institutional legitimacy.

Postcolonial approach: tradition as critique and the decolonization of form : Postcolonial theatre studies interpret the Theatre of Roots as a strategy for producing modernity without mimicking European realist

norms. Awasthi (1989) and Mee (2008) provide a framework in which traditional performance resources are not museum artifacts but living techniques for reimagining spectatorship. Hayavadana participates in this decolonizing project by demonstrating that mythic dramaturgy can carry critical modern inquiry. In this reading, myth is not pre-modern; it is a modern resource for naming contradictions produced by colonial and postcolonial social transformations.

Performance studies approach: truth as staged and socially performed : Performance studies shifts the question from 'What is true?' to 'How does truth become believable?' Hayavadana suggests that truths—about marriage, honor, identity, and the normal body—are enacted through ritual, repetition, and public recognition. The play's stylization and framing devices insist that identity itself is performative: persons become legible by citing cultural scripts. Myth intensifies this insight because it makes the scripts visible; it turns what is ordinarily background (custom, law, gender expectation) into foreground theatrical action.

Discussion: When Myth and Truth Collide : Hayavadana ultimately demonstrates that truth is plural and often incompatible. Spiritual truth points toward a composite self that resists reduction. Social truth demands stable categories—one body, one husband, one recognized identity—because institutions depend upon legibility. Myth becomes the medium that exposes this collision. By staging impossibilities, the play reveals the real violence of cultural simplifications: to restore order, society must decide what counts and what does not.

The play also warns against the ideology of wholeness. The longing to be complete can be spiritually profound, but as a social demand it becomes coercive. In this sense, Hayavadana's most enduring truth is ethical: systems that insist on absolute unity—of self, gender role, or social identity—produce suffering when human life proves mixed, divided, and evolving.

Conclusion

By transforming a mythic motif into a theatre of inquiry, Karnad shows that myth is not the opposite of truth but one of its most powerful vehicles. Hayavadana reveals how identities are made at the intersection of body, desire, and institutional recognition, and how the demand for a single authorized truth can become tragic. The play's hybrid aesthetics, consistent with Theatre of Roots debates, further suggest that theatrical form itself participates in truth-production: style, narration, and ritualized performance make the social construction of identity visible. In the end, Karnad's play leaves audiences with a modern insight articulated through myth: wholeness is a dream, but the policing of that dream is a social reality.

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Values Gives to Us By Rama in The Ramayana

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Abstract:

Ramayana is one of the ancient epics. This epic is written by Valmiki and is based on Rama, who is considered an incarnation of Vishnu. Through this research paper, the human values of Rama have been studied by studying the behavior, decisions and all other events. Some are mainly compassion, obedience, leadership, others. Some are compassion, obedience, courage, selfcontrol, leadership, etc.

Keyword: *Values, Rama, Dasharatha, Sacrifices, Duty, Vanvasa.*

Introduction:

The *Ramayana* written by Maharishi Valmiki is about two crows courting while he was doing penance. At the same time, an arrow from a hunter hit the female bird and the female bird fell down and cried out, which inspired Valmiki to write the *Ramayana*.

Rama in the *Ramayana* is not just a king or a lover, but also an ideal son, king, husband, brother and an ideal teacher. This research paper has studied the human values in Rama through various situations and various behaviors. The important values in Rama are : 1) Respect 2) Loyalty 3) Devotion 4) Courage 5) Compassion 6) Leadership 7) Self-control etc.

Literature review:

Some of the human values in Rama are as follows:

1] **Duty, Loyalty, Commitment:** Ram was to become the king of Ayodhya but his father Dasharatha was bound by a promise he made to his wife Kaikeyi and when Rama knew this, he accepted exile without any hesitation. Despite being wronged, Rama preferred duty over personal pleasure. This decision of his shows the characteristics of duty.

Example: Rama's exile.

This incident teaches us that no matter how difficult it is to follow moral principles, Rama showed us that doing so strengthens character and earns respect. A person who is committed to truth and duty sometimes has to face hardships without complaint.

2] **Obedience:** Rama's relationship with his parents, especially King Dasharatha, is a symbol of the love, respect, and obedience between a good father and his children.

Example: Obedience to parents

After Kaikeyi demanded, King Dasharatha reluctantly sent Rama into exile. Despite Rama's own unwillingness, Rama obeyed his father's wishes and accepted his decision.

3] **Courage & patience:** Rama's journey was not peaceful and he faced many dangers and battles. Yet Rama never lost his courage.

Example: War with Ravana

When Rama fought the demon king of Lanka, Ravana, it was a fight for justice, order and freedom. Rama's courage was not motivated by hatred, but by the promise of righteousness.

4] **Facing internal challenges:** Courage is not just physical bravery, it is moral bravery. Standing up for the truth sometimes involves facing the majority vote against it.

5] **Compassion and forgiveness:** Despite being a fierce warrior, Rama was also compassionate.

Example: Treating enemies with respect

After Ravana's misdeeds, Rama respected him as a learned king. When Ravana's brother Vibhishana sought refuge, Rama protected him despite being an enemy. Rama said that devotion to righteousness is more important than lineage or background.

Example Mercy after victory

Even after defeating Ravana, Rama did not show arrogance or celebrate. Instead, he focused on restoring peace and justice. This makes it clear that Rama is forgiving and has no sense of revenge.

6] **Self control:** Rama practiced self-discipline in thought and action.
Example: patience even in the most difficult situations.
Rama resisted the temptations of comfort, ease, and power while in exile. He kept his promise even when fear or pain could have made him break it.

7] **Mental strength:** Rama's calmness and clarity in the face of adversity remind us that self-control shapes character more than momentary pleasures or symbols. Self-control makes it possible to face all adversities.

8] **Leadership and Teamwork:** Rama showed that leadership isn't about power, but about service, humility, and collaboration.
Example: Unity with Allies
When planning to rescue Sita, Rama united people of different backgrounds—monkeys, bears, sages—and worked with them respectfully. This shows that diversity and cooperation produce strength.

9] **Leadership in Action:** Rama didn't command from behind; he joined the frontline. He acknowledged others' strengths and credited them, showing that leaders succeed when their team succeeds.

Conclusion:

This research paper highlights the many values that can be learned from Rama through Rama's behavior, context, and struggles in the *Ramayana*.

We learn from this that while walking on the path of truth and duty, one has to endure many pains, but if the intention is pure, one also gains the strength to endure the pain.

The story of Rama is not just a poem, it also illustrates many values. We learn which values, when put into practice while living life, shape our character and enable us to face difficulties.

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Representation of Indian Mythology in Indian Classical Dance

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Abstract:

Indian classical dance is one of the oldest art forms of India. It began many years ago and is still practiced today. These dances are not only for entertainment. They are also used to tell stories from Indian mythology. Indian mythology includes stories of gods, goddesses, kings, queens and heroes. Through dance these stories are shown using hand movements, facial expressions, body movements, and music.

Indian classical dances such as Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi, Kathakali, Manipuri, and Kuchipudi were first performed in temples. These dances were a way to pray to God. Dancers showed love, devotion, anger, happiness, and sadness through their expressions. Most dance stories come from holy books like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the Puranas. Even today, Indian classical dance helps us learn about our culture and traditions. Thus, Indian classical dance plays an important role in showing and protecting Indian mythology.

Keywords:*Indian Classical Dance, Indian Mythology, Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi, Kathakali, Manipuri, Kuchipudi*

Introduction:

Indian classical dance is a very important part of Indian culture. It is loved and respected all over the world. Indian classical dance is not only a dance. It is also a way to tell stories and teach values. From ancient times, dance was connected with religion and worship. People danced in temples to please God.

Indian mythology is full of stories about gods and goddesses like Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu, Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, and Goddess Durga. These stories teach us good values like truth, kindness, courage, and devotion. Indian classical dance uses these stories to teach people in a simple way. When people watch dance, they can understand stories even without words.

Dance uses music, rhythm, hand signs, footwork, and facial expressions. All these help to show feelings and stories. Because of this, Indian classical dance is a very strong medium to show mythology. Even today, children and adults learn about mythology through dance performances.

Literature Review:

Many scholars and writers have studied Indian classical dance and its connection with Indian mythology. Their works help us understand how dance has been used as a medium to tell mythological stories and preserve Indian culture.

Bharata Muni's *Natya Shastra* is the most important ancient text related to Indian classical dance and drama. In this book, Bharata Muni explains the rules of dance, acting, music, and expressions. He states that dance is not only for enjoyment but also for teaching people good values and emotions. The Natya Shastra shows that mythology is the base of Indian dance because most dance performances are based on stories of gods and goddesses.

Leela Samson, in her book *The Joy of Classical Dances of India* (2002), explains different Indian classical dance forms in a simple and clear way. She discusses how dances like Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi, and Manipuri are closely connected with temple traditions and religious stories. According to her, classical dance helps people understand Indian mythology through movement and expression. She also highlights the spiritual nature of Indian dance.

Some online articles such as *The Source of Ancient Indian Classical Dance Forms and Art of Indian Classical Dance Forms* discuss the *origin and development of classical dances in India*. These sources explain that Indian classical dances started in temples and were performed as part of worship. They also describe how stories from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Puranas are shown through dance forms. These articles help readers understand the strong link between mythology and classical dance.

Other studies on Indian aesthetics explain how emotions, known as rasa, play an important role in dance. Through facial expressions and gestures, dancers express emotions like love, devotion, anger, and peace. These emotions help bring mythological characters to life on stage.

From the above studies, it is clear that Indian classical dance has always been connected with Indian mythology. Scholars agree that dance is a powerful tool to preserve ancient stories and cultural values. This research paper builds upon these studies to show how mythology is represented in Indian classical dance forms.

Indian Mythology and Classical Dance:

Indian classical dance comes from an old book called the *Natya Shastra*. This book was written by Bharata Muni. The Natya Shastra teaches how to dance, act, and express emotions. It explains how can be used to teach people and make them happy.

Lord Shiva is known as Nataraja, the God of Dance. His dance shows how the world is created, protected, and destroyed. Many Indian classical dancers start their performance by praying to Lord Shiva. This shows the close link between mythology and dance.

Indian classical dance has three main parts:

1. Natya – telling a story through dance and acting
2. Nritta – pure dance steps with rhythm
3. Nritya – dance with expressions and emotions
4. Using these three parts, dancers show stories from mythology in a clear and beautiful way.

Bharatanatyam and Mythology:

Bharatanatyam is one of the oldest classical dance forms of India. It comes from Tamil Nadu. Long ago, Bharatanatyam was performed in temples by trained dancers. This dance is closely connected with Hindu gods and goddesses.

Most Bharatanatyam dances show stories of Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu, and Goddess Parvati. The dancer uses hand gestures called mudras. Facial expressions are very important in this dance. Through Bharatanatyam, stories from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are shown. This dance helps people understand mythology in a simple and visual way.

Kathak and Mythological Stories:

Kathak is a classical dance from North India. The word Kathak means story. In earlier times, dancers were called Kathakas. They travelled from place to place and told stories through dance.

Most Kathak dances show stories of Radha and Krishna. These stories talk about love and devotion. Kathak dance has fast footwork and beautiful spins. The sound of ankle bells makes the dance lively. Both men and women perform Kathak. Through this dance, mythological stories are shared with people of all ages.

Kuchipudi and Mythology:

Kuchipudi is a dance form from Andhra Pradesh. It started as a dance-drama. In this dance, the dancer sings, dances, and acts. Because of this, the dancer must learn many skills.

Kuchipudi shows stories from the Puranas. Stories of gods and goddesses are shown through dance and dialogue. Earlier, only men performed Kuchipudi. Today, both men and women perform this dance. Kuchipudi helps people enjoy mythology through music and movement.

Manipuri Dance and Mythology:

Manipuri dance comes from the state of Manipur. It is a soft and gentle dance form. This dance mainly shows the love story of Radha and Krishna. These dances are called Raas Leela.

Manipuri dance is calm and peaceful. The movements are slow and smooth. Dancers wear beautiful traditional clothes. Through Manipuri dance, people learn about devotion, love, and faith. Mythology plays a very important role in this dance form.

Odissi and Mythological Themes:

Odissi is a classical dance from Odisha. It is connected with the worship of Lord Jagannath. This dance is very graceful and beautiful.

Odissi dances show stories from Gita Govinda. These stories talk about Radha and Krishna. Odissi dance movements look like temple sculptures. Through Odissi, ancient mythological stories come alive on stage.

Importance of Mythology in Dance:

Mythology gives meaning to Indian classical dance. Without mythology, these dances would lose their soul. Mythological stories teach values like truth, kindness, bravery, and devotion. Dance makes these stories easy to understand.

Children learn mythology by watching dance. Elders feel connected to tradition. Thus, dance helps connect people with culture. Even today, classical dance keeps mythology alive.

Conclusion:

Indian classical dance is a treasure of Indian culture. It helps us understand Indian mythology in a simple and beautiful way. Through hand movements, facial expressions, and music, dancers tell old stories again and again. These dances keep our culture, religion, and values alive.

Even in modern times, Indian classical dance is respected all over the world. It teaches us about our roots and traditions. Indian classical dance is not just an art. It is a living form of mythology.

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Cosmopolitanism as Cultural Myth in *The Namesake* (2003): Naming, Racial Legibility, and Mourning as Truth-Regimes that Decode the "Global Citizen" Narrative

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Abstract:

Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake (2003) exposes "global citizenship" as a as a culturally produced myth that masks unequal regimes of belonging rather neutral condition of freedom achieved through migration, education, and cultural fluency. Drawing on myth criticism (Barthes), diaspora theory (Hall), and postcolonial accounts of hybridity and ambivalence (Bhabha), it shows how Lahiri dismantles the cosmopolitan promise of self-invention by staging identity as a struggle over legibility-who is recognizable, acceptable, and "placeable" within national and social institutions. Through the novel's central device of naming (Gogol/Nikhil), Lahiri dramatizes how seemingly personal choices are governed by public scripts: forms, introductions, accents, racialized perception, and the social economy of respectability. The novel's second major intervention is affective: mourning and intergenerational memory disrupt the fantasy of linear assimilation and reveal identity as an inheritance shaped by loss, obligation, and cultural narrative continuity. By reading cosmopolitanism as an everyday myth that naturalizes privilege-especially the privilege of unmarked mobility-this demonstrates how The Namesake "unveils narratives" and "decodes realities," aligning closely with the conference theme of myths and truths in literature and culture.

Keywords: *Lahiri, The Namesake, cosmopolitanism, myth, diaspora, naming, racialization, belonging, mourning, truth-regimes*

Introduction: Myths of Mobility, Truths of Belonging

Contemporary global culture frequently frames migration and transnational mobility as pathways to freedom: one crosses borders, gains education, speaks in cosmopolitan idioms, and becomes the author of a self. Within this script, the "global citizen" appears as a modern ideal-flexible, multilingual, culturally competent, and unburdened by origins. Yet literature repeatedly reveals the limits of this promise. Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003) is often read as a diasporic coming-of-age narrative centered on hybrid identity formation. It proposes a more pointed claim: *The Namesake* is a sustained critique of cosmopolitanism as a cultural myth-an ideology that presents belonging as meritocratic and self-made while obscuring the truth of racialized legibility, institutional gatekeeping, and intergenerational inheritance.

The novel's central insight is that identity does not become "free" simply because one is mobile. Instead, mobility relocates the subject into new systems of recognition and misrecognition. The protagonist's oscillation between "Gogol" and "Nikhil" is not merely a psychological or aesthetic matter; it is a struggle over how one becomes readable in the public sphere. Naming, Lahiri shows, is a site where culture produces truth: it assigns place, scripts expectation, and regulates access to social ease. The private desire to "choose oneself" confronts the public demand to be legible within norms of nation, race, class, and family.

The Namesake dismantles the myth of the "global citizen" by showing freedom to self-invent is constrained by truth-regimes-everyday mechanisms (bureaucracy, social interaction, racial perception, and mourning practices) that determine who can belong, on what terms, and at what affective cost. Naming operates as the novel's formal engine for exposing these constraints, while mourning functions as the counter-truth that makes assimilation's fantasy of clean severance impossible.

First, it reads "global citizenship" as a myth in the Barthesian sense: a naturalized story that transforms historically contingent relations of power into common sense. Second, it demonstrates how Lahiri "decodes reality" by embedding those power relations in ordinary scenes-introductions, paperwork, parties, classrooms, funerals-where culture quietly determines whose story counts as normal.

Conceptual Framework: What Counts as "Myth" and "Truth"?

Myth not as ancient fable but as a modern cultural narrative that naturalizes ideology. In *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes describes myth as a second-order system of signification: it takes cultural constructs and presents them as obvious, timeless truths (Barthes, 1957/1972). When cosmopolitan discourse implies that mobility yields freedom and belonging, it functions as myth: it turns unequal access to movement, recognition, and "unmarked" identity into a story of individual choice.

By contrast, **truth** here does not mean a single stable essence but the lived realities and structural conditions that myths conceal. This includes what Stuart Hall describes as identity's formation through representation and difference-identity is not simply possessed but produced within cultural systems (Hall, 1990). It also includes what postcolonial theory highlights as ambivalence: the migrant subject's position is never simply inside or outside but negotiated in the "in-between," often under pressure to perform acceptable forms of selfhood (Bhabha, 1994).

The phrase **truth-regimes** is used in a broad cultural sense: repeated practices and discourses that produce what appears real, normal, and legitimate. In *The Namesake*, truth-regimes are not abstract laws; they are daily interactions-how a name is heard, how an accent is judged, how "foreignness" is inferred, how grief reorganizes identity. These are the novel's decoding mechanisms: Lahiri exposes the backstage labor that makes cosmopolitan identity look effortless.

Review of Literature: From Diasporic Identity to Cosmopolitan Myth

Scholarship on Lahiri has frequently centered on themes of diaspora, cultural hybridity, generational conflict, assimilation, and the affective textures of immigrant life. Within postcolonial studies, the migrant's negotiation of belonging is often framed through hybridity, liminality, and ambivalence (Bhabha, 1994). Within cultural studies, identity is approached as a process shaped by history and representation, not as a stable core (Hall, 1990). These approaches have been productive for reading *The Namesake* as a narrative of cultural translation, particularly in the relationship between first-generation immigrants (Ashima and Ashoke) and their American-born child.

However, a gap remains when the novel is treated primarily as a psychological story of individual identity rather than a cultural critique of cosmopolitan ideology. "Cosmopolitanism" is sometimes assumed as a descriptive condition-characters live between India and America; therefore, they are cosmopolitan. Yet cosmopolitanism also operates as a norm: a value-laden ideal of openness, sophistication, and mobility that often hides unequal conditions of who gets to embody it without penalty. It focuses on that ideological dimension. It reads *The Namesake* as revealing how cosmopolitan belonging is policed through legibility and respectability-especially through naming, social presentation, and institutional recognition.

The intervention here is not to deny hybridity but to specify its power relations. The question is not only *how* Gogol becomes Nikhil, but *what forces make that transformation desirable and partially necessary*. The novel is thus read as an exposure of myth-making: it shows how the "global citizen" is produced as a culturally celebrated narrative while the immigrant subject's everyday negotiation of race, family obligation, and grief reveals a more difficult truth.

The Myth of the "Global Citizen": Self-Invention as Cultural Promise

The Namesake begins with a foundational immigrant aspiration: relocation as possibility. The States appears as a space where the self may be remade-through education, professional status, and cultural adaptation. This is the cosmopolitan myth in narrative form: movement becomes destiny, and modernity becomes an upgrade.

But Lahiri's novel does not celebrate this myth uncritically. Instead, it places it under tension from the start by showing that immigrant life involves not only opportunity but also loneliness, cultural displacement, and the pressure of constant negotiation. Ashima's early experience in the States underscores that migration is not merely spatial; it reorganizes time, kinship, and intimacy. What looks like cosmopolitan openness often feels like isolation and effortful adaptation.

The "global citizen" myth also implies that identity is a matter of personal choice-select the right name, the right social group, the right cultural performance, and you can belong. Lahiri sets up this promise

most explicitly through Gogol's later desire to rename himself. The logic is familiar: a better name will enable a better life. Yet the novel reveals that the desire for self-invention is itself culturally produced-born from the friction between how the subject wants to be seen and how the world insists on seeing him.

In Barthes's terms, the myth works by making its assumptions appear natural: to belong, one must be readable within dominant norms; therefore, adaptation appears as common sense rather than coercion. The novel's critique begins when it insists on showing the cost of this "common sense."

Naming as a Site of Myth-Making: Gogol, Nikhil, and the Politics of Legibility

The name "Gogol" functions as the novel's most concentrated symbol of myth vs truth. On the surface, a name should be a neutral label; in practice, it is a social technology. It marks difference, provokes assumptions, and produces a narrative about the person before any conversation occurs. Lahiri turns naming into a cultural battleground: the protagonist experiences the name not as private meaning but as public friction.

The Myth: Renaming as Freedom

When Gogol chooses "Nikhil," the act resembles the cosmopolitan ideal of self-authorship. The new name suggests smoothness and social ease: it is easier to pronounce, easier to place, easier to carry in professional and romantic settings. The myth here is that identity is modular-change the signifier, gain control of the self.

Within myth logic, the new name promises a clean break: from awkwardness to confidence, from foreignness to fluency, from childhood constraints to adult freedom. It is the narrative of reinvention that modern culture celebrates.

The Truth: Legibility is Power, Not Neutrality

Yet Lahiri exposes a truth underneath this myth: renaming does not eliminate structural perception; it negotiates it. "Nikhil" may be more socially manageable, but the need for manageability reveals the coercive background: certain identities must be softened to be welcomed. The very fact that a name must be strategically curated shows that belonging is conditional.

Hall's concept of identity as produced through representation clarifies the stakes: Gogol's struggle is not simply internal confusion but a clash between representations imposed on him and the meanings he tries to claim (Hall, 1990). Naming becomes a "truth-regime" because it shapes social reality: who is considered normal, who is questioned, who is exoticized, who is made to explain themselves.

The novel also highlights the relational dimension of naming. For Ashoke, "Gogol" is tied to survival and memory; it carries the intimate narrative of a near-death experience and the event that shaped his life's trajectory. For Gogol, the name becomes a public burden. The conflict reveals a deeper truth: identity is not fully individual property. It is intergenerational, emotionally charged, and socially interpreted.

Naming as Everyday Border

If "passport privilege" is often discussed as a geopolitical advantage, Lahiri reveals a cultural analogue: naming functions as an everyday border. It controls access to social ease. The protagonist's movement between Gogol and Nikhil resembles border-crossing: different documents, different introductions, different receptions. In each context, the name becomes a checkpoint-an encounter where belonging is evaluated.

Thus, the novel "decodes reality" by showing that the border is not only at the airport. The border is in the mouth that hesitates over pronunciation, the form that requires fixed identity, the social ritual that demands a coherent story.

Institutions, Social Scripts, and the Truth of Racialized Belonging

The cosmopolitan myth imagines institutions as neutral: universities reward merit, workplaces reward competence, social life rewards charisma. *The Namesake* complicates this by showing how institutions and social scripts are saturated with cultural expectations. The novel's realism is crucial: it locates power not in spectacular discrimination alone but in subtle interactions where the subject becomes legible or illegible.

Paperwork and the Demand for Stable Identity

Modern institutions require stable categories: legal names, consistent records, standardized forms. Such bureaucratic practices appear neutral, but they enforce a particular model of identity-fixed, singular, easily documented. This becomes a truth-regime because it produces the "real" person as what can be recorded. For a diasporic subject navigating multiple names and cultural codes, the demand for stability becomes pressure: choose one version of yourself, make it official, and live with the consequences.

This is where the "global citizen" myth cracks. The world that celebrates mobility also demands administrative coherence. The subject cannot simply be fluid; they must be fileable.

Social Spaces: Parties, Dating, and Cultural Audits

Lahiri's depiction of friendships and romantic relationships shows cosmopolitanism as performance. Social settings often require cultural fluency-knowing what to say, how to say it, and how to appear at ease. The myth suggests this fluency is a personal skill; the truth is that it is unequally distributed and unevenly rewarded. Certain bodies and backgrounds are presumed to belong; others must prove they do.

In this sense, the novel reveals cosmopolitanism as a selective openness. It can include the migrant subject, but often on condition that difference becomes tasteful and manageable-an aesthetic diversity rather than a disruptive presence. The protagonist's shift to "Nikhil" can be read as learning this rule: reduce friction, become acceptable, and the world will respond more smoothly.

Racial Legibility and the Limits of "Choice"

The novel repeatedly suggests that identity is not only what one claims but what others recognize. This is the truth that undermines cosmopolitan freedom: even with cultural competence, the subject may remain marked. Recognition is not fully controllable. It is mediated by racialized perception, accent, and assumption.

Bhabha's account of ambivalence helps illuminate this: the migrant subject is often welcomed as "almost the same, but not quite," included yet continually reminded of difference (Bhabha, 1994). The "global citizen" myth promises full inclusion; the truth revealed by the novel is conditional belonging, frequently dependent on performance and perceived proximity to dominant norms.

Mourning as Counter-Truth: Inheritance, Memory, and the Collapse of Assimilation Fantasy:

If naming reveals the social politics of legibility, mourning reveals the affective truth that cosmopolitan myths cannot accommodate. The myth of global citizenship depends on a fantasy of clean severance: one can leave origins behind, reinvent the self, and move forward unburdened. Mourning interrupts this logic. It returns the subject to the claims of family, history, and memory-not as nostalgia, but as unavoidable reality.

Ashoke's death becomes a pivotal event that reorganizes Gogol's relationship to his name, his family, and his past. The novel suggests that grief makes visible what assimilation tries to hide: identity is not only an individual project but also an inheritance bound to others' lives and losses.

It is where Lahiri most forcefully "decodes realities." The global citizen myth privileges forward motion-new cities, new careers, new relationships. Mourning reveals that the self is not a purely forward-moving narrative. It is layered, recursive, and anchored in the stories that preceded it.

In cultural terms, mourning also reactivates ritual and community. The immigrant family's practices-gathering, remembrance, forms of condolence-function as alternative truth-regimes to institutional modernity. They assert that a person's meaning is not exhausted by professional success or social fluency. The truth of belonging is relational and ethical, tied to care and continuity.

Thus, the novel's critique becomes sharper: cosmopolitanism may offer mobility, but it cannot erase the human facts of attachment and loss. The "myth" of free self-invention breaks against the "truth" of relational identity.

Synthesis: What the Novel Unveils and What It Decodes

The Namesake contributes to the conference theme by revealing how cultural myths function as narrative shortcuts that simplify reality. The myth of the global citizen tells a seductive story: cross borders, become modern, choose yourself. Lahiri's novel unveils the hidden labor and constraint behind this story.

What the novel unveils

1. **Belonging is conditional**, granted through social recognition rather than guaranteed by residence or education.
2. **Identity is policed through legibility**, with naming as a key technology of acceptability.

3. **Institutions appear neutral but enforce coherence**, pressuring diasporic subjects to stabilize their identities.
4. **Cosmopolitan ease is unevenly distributed**, shaped by race, accent, and implicit norms.

What the novel decodes

1. The "global citizen" is not merely a person, but a **cultural figure** produced by ideology-one who can move without being questioned, explainable, or disciplined.
2. For the diasporic subject, mobility often means **translation under unequal conditions**: learning how to be readable, minimizing friction, performing acceptability.
3. Mourning reveals the ultimate failure of the myth's promise of severance; it returns the subject to **inheritance and interdependence** as truths that cosmopolitan ideology cannot dissolve.

In Barthes's terms, Lahiri demystifies cosmopolitanism by restoring its history-showing that what appears natural (belonging through mobility) is structured by social and institutional power.

Conclusion: Cosmopolitanism Without Innocence

It is argued that *The Namesake* is best understood not only as a narrative of hybrid identity but as an exposure of cosmopolitanism's ideological underside. Lahiri dismantles the myth that transnational mobility guarantees freedom by showing how belonging is governed by truth-regimes-naming, institutional documentation, social scripts, racialized perception, and mourning.

The novel's enduring relevance lies in its method: it does not rely on dramatic declarations of exclusion. Instead, it locates cultural power in the ordinary. The "reality" Lahiri decodes is made of small moments-pronunciations, introductions, forms, family rituals-that collectively shape the contours of a life. Through these details, the novel insists on a rigorous truth: the self is never purely self-made, and cosmopolitan identity is never innocent of power.

For studies of diaspora and contemporary culture, this reading suggests a shift in emphasis: from celebrating hybridity as a solution to examining how hybridity is lived under conditions of unequal recognition. For the conference theme, *The Namesake* demonstrates literature's critical function: it reveals how myths become believable and how truths persist beneath narratives of modern freedom.

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Representation of Myth in the Film Kantara

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Abstract :

The Kannada film Kantara, directed by Rishab Shetty, presents a powerful representation of myth through the folk ritual tradition of Bhoota kola from the Tamilnadu region of Karnataka unlike mainstream mythological films based on epics like the Ramayana or Mahabharata, Kantara focuses on local myths rooted in nature worship, spirit, cultural identity.

This paper explores how myth is represented in the film through ritual performance, symbolism and social conflict. It also examines how storytelling transforms folk mythology into a moder narrative that connects tradition with contemporary issues such as land rights, power and cultural survival.

Keywords : *Myth, Kantara, Bhoota Kola, Folklore, Culture.*

Introduction :

Myth has always central to Indian cultural life, influencing moral, culture, values. Indian cinema has used mythology, especially through stories of gods, miracles and epic heroes. In contrast, *Kantara* presents myth not as a distant legend but as a distant legend but as a living tradition that continues to shape the present. The film happened in a forested village where faith in local spirits is deeply rooted in everyday life. Through the ritual practice of Bhoota kola, the narrative created a world in which spiritual belief and human reality exist together, making the mythic realm an active force that affects social order, justice and survival.

Literature Review :

Myth and folklore are important parts of Indian culture. Myths are stories that explain life, nature, and human values. Indian cinema has mostly shown mythology through famous epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata. These films usually present gods and stories from the past.

Scholars say the local and folk myths are different because they are living traditions. Rituals like Bhoota Kola are still practiced and people believe that spirits are truly present. These rituals are connected to land, nature, and village life and also help in maintaining justice and order in the community.

Researchers explain that during Bhoota Kola, the performer is believed to become the spirit. This removes the difference between human and divine. Film Scholars say cinema can powerfully show such traditions and connect them with modern issues.

Studies on *Kantara* show that the film presents myth as a living force. It respects folk beliefs and shows how mythology protects land, culture, and people. The film uses local folklore to talk about present-day problems like land rights, power, and cultural survival.

Mythological Characters

1. Panjurli : Panjurli represented as a wild boar. Panjurli was a young boar adopted by Goddess Parvati After the boar become destructive shiva and Parvati send it to Earth to protect people and uphold righteousness.

In the film he is the primary deity of the village, ensuring harmony between nature and humans. He acts as a guardian against evil and punishes threaten the community or land.

2. Guliga : In the Bhoota Kola tradition Guliga is known as a deity who rarely forgives transgressions. Guliga born from a stone found by Goddess Parvati in sacred ash when Lord shiva threw the stone, it landed in Vaikuntha where Guliga manifested as a powerful destructive force.

Insatiable Hunger- Guliga is characterized by an uncontrollable hunger.

In the film's final sequence the protagonist shiva is possessed not by panjurli but by the ferocious Guliga Daiva. This possession is marked by raw, animalistic energy, blood smearing and an intense scream that signals the deliverance of divine justice upon the villains.

3. Divine Balance :

The two spirits often work in tandem panjurli provides blessings and protection, while Guliga ensures justice by punishing those who commit atrocities.

Ritualistic Connections

1. **Bhoota Kola :** This is a real world annual ritual where professional performers act as medium for the daivas. The movie's climax depicts the spirit possession of the protagonist shiva by Guliga Daiva to deliver justice.
2. **Man Vs Nature Mythos :** The film uses the myth of the " Sacred stone" and the " Divine Boar" to explore the sanctity of land the consequences of human greed.
3. **Mainstream Integration :** Director Rishab shetty's films connect these local traditions to broader Hindu mythology by portraying the Daivas as ganas of lord shiva this has sparked debate among some locals who view the daiva traditions as distinct from Vedic Hinduism.

Mythological and Narrative links

1. **Ancestral legacy :**
   Rishab Shetty plays multipal roles across the films including Berme, Annapa and Kaadubettu shiva connecting the lineage of those chosen by a Daiva
2. **The sacred well :**
   The prequel ends with Berme disappearing into a sacred well. The same mystical location where shiva's father vanished in the 1970s and where shiva himself disappears at the end of the film.
3. **The sacred stones :**
   The lore mentions four sacred stones representing the deities the films progressively reveal these, with three shown as of the prequel's conclusion.

Conclusion :

The film *Kantara* represents myth as a living cultural force deeply connected to land, identity and justice. Through the ritual Bhoota kola, the film shows myth not as fantasy but as a belief system that shapes real social life.

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Vivekananda Sangeet: Sonic Spirituality, Vedantic Humanism, and the Aesthetics of National Awakening

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Abstract

Vivekananda Sangeet constitutes a distinctive and intellectually charged corpus within the cultural history of modern India, where music operates as a conduit for philosophical transmission, ethical awakening, and collective self-fashioning. Composed by Swami Vivekananda, these songs transcend the conventional boundaries of devotional lyricism to articulate a dynamic synthesis of Vedantic metaphysics, humanistic ethics, and nationalist consciousness. Situated at the intersection of spirituality and socio-cultural reform, Vivekananda Sangeet reconfigures sound as a mode of praxis—simultaneously contemplative and transformative.

Thematically, the songs foreground concepts such as abhaya (fearlessness), self-realisation, renunciation through action, and universal fraternity, central to Vivekananda's reinterpretation of Advaita Vedanta for a modern, socially engaged subject. Compositions like "Khandana Bhava-Bandhana" dramatize the annihilation of ignorance and existential bondage, translating complex philosophical abstractions into affective musical experience. The multilingual texture of the lyrics—drawing from Sanskrit, Bengali, and Brajabuli—enables a dialogic engagement with diverse devotional and intellectual traditions.

From a musicological perspective, Vivekananda Sangeet negotiates classical raga structures with accessible melodic contours, facilitating collective participation while preserving spiritual gravitas. These songs function pedagogically, embedding philosophical instruction within aesthetic pleasure and emotional resonance. Historically, they played a crucial role in shaping the moral imagination of Indian youth during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, aligning spiritual emancipation with national regeneration.

In contemporary cultural discourse, Vivekananda Sangeet endures as a performative archive of sonic spirituality, reaffirming music's capacity to mediate between inner transformation and social responsibility.
Keywords*Vivekananda Sangeet; Sonic Spirituality; Vedantic Humanism; Advaita Vedanta; National Consciousness; Aesthetic Pedagogy; Cultural Modernity*

Introduction:

The spiritual songs of India in an essential part of India's rich culture and religious heritage. Generally, these types of songs are put in spirituality, philosophy and mysticism. To express surrender and a connection with the devine. From ancient Vedic chants and bhajans to kirtans, shabads, qawwalis. Indian spiritual music transeends language, religion and religion. It is not only presented as a medium of old ship but also as a means of moral instruction inner peace and spiritual awaking. Through simple melodies and profound lyrics, spiritual songs have guided individuals toward truth, compassion and self realisation for centuries.

What is Advaita Vedanta?

In a school of Hindu philosophy, Aadi Shankaracharya is the founder of the Advaita Vedanta. It emphasizes in four points:

a) Non-dual reality: The ultimate reality (Brahman) is one, infinity and unchanging.
b) Identify of Atma and Brahman: The individual salf (Atma) is identical With Brahman.
c) Maya (Illusion): The whole world is illusion and true reality is Brahman alone.
d) Liberation (Moksha): Realization of one's true nature as Brahman leads to liberation.

How advaita Vedanta is expressed in Swamiji sangeet?

Swami Vivekananda Sangeet are in living emotional expression of Vedanta. He does not teach Advaita as dry philosophy- he sings it into the heart. We will discuss here how it is shown clearly in sangeet-

a) Non- dual reality:

An eternal reality 'Thou art that' is the main chapter of Advaita Vedant which say **'Aham Brahmāsmi'** - the identity of the individual self with the absolute. The Swamiji's Sangeet erase the boundary between I, you, God and world.

In songs like "**khandana, Bhava - Bandhana**." God is not distant or separate. The devotee calls out. Yet the call itself arises from the Same reality. The singer and the sung to are one.

This is classic Advaita: devotion without duality.

b) From personal God to the Impersonal Absolute:

Swamiji always began his spiritual work with **'Saguna Bhakti'** (God with form) but subtly leads the listener to **'Nirguna Brahma'** (Formless reality)

In **"Om Hreem Ritam"** and similar chants: There is no narrative God, no mythic personality, only Sound, vibration and Cosmic uning made this song Brahman which is limitless and beginningless, and formless.

c) Maya (illution):

The world is Maya but It is not rejectable. Advaita Vedanta Said that the universe is as illusion - not false, but relatively real. In Swamiji's sangeet, we get the balanced view of this Concept.

His Sangeet represents that if anyone san want to renounce the world emotionally, that can be difficult. But sangeet's acknowledge-

(i) Sorrow, Bondage, struggle. (ii) Then transcend them through knowledge.

and the lines of his sangeet indicate the breakdown, of boundary, fear, and arise internal power. It expressed that bonadage exists only until knowledge dawns: This is Advaita in action-not escapism, but awakeing within life.

d) Awaking of power:

The divine self as strength, not weakness. Unlike passive or world denying Spiritually, Swamiji's advata is heroic.

In his Song **"Jaya Jaya Janani Janmabhumi."** And other patriotie - spiritual songs -The nation, the people. and the self merge into one living reality.

Here Advaita says: -

As humanity is Brahman, and service to the humanity. It changes non-duality into ethical energy and national consciousness in vedanta.

e) Rhythm and Mantra:

Swamiji expressed Mantric repetition, minimal lyrics and powerfull rhythm in his song where its present Vedanta which is rhythmic and mantric.

Because Advaita Vedanta is not only understandable things but also a process of realisation. The music stills the ego, dissolve dual thought, and leaves pure awareness. So, the listener duesn't think advaita, they enter in it.

f) Fearlessness:

It is a sign of realized Advaita. and leads to abhaya (Fearlessness). And Swamiji's Sangeet, expressed with thounderous tune where it says

i) No fear of death. ii) No fear of Sin. iii) No fear of the world.

Because if "All in one, whom shall I fear?" This is Advaita translated into spiritual and moral confidence which is clearly reflected by Swami Vivekananda in his Sangeet.

Vivekananda Sangeet:

In the cultural history of modern India, Vivekananda Sangeet constitutes as a distinctive and intellectually charged corpus. His songs are worked a like corpus of devotional and inspirational which occupy a unique position in Indian spiritual history. These compositions are not merely musical expression

of devotion; they are sonic expression of vedantic philosophy, humanistic ethics, and national consciousness based on Advaita Vedanta and socio-political conditions of Colonial India. The songs of Vivekananda are worked as a powerful aesthetic medium for spiritual awakeing and national regeneratia near every age of people,

so, its impact can be understood ander four interconnected dimension.

a) Impact on National Cruciousness: Vivekanand Sangeet is created during a period of colonial subjugation and cultural Self doubt. This Songs is worked as a medium function of awakeing and self assertion.

i) Revival of self respect: Swamiji said **" Arise, Awake and stop not till the goal is reached."** the songs inspired self confidence in India's spiritual and cultural heritage.

ii) Spiritual nationalism: On another site of unlike aggressive political nationalism, Vivekananda Sangeet fostered a nationalism rooted in spiritual Unity, moral strength and service to the people.

iii)Collective identity: Bharat is a sacred land and the people are the career of divineity. His songs cultivated a shared national soul by involving the above ideas.

iv)Mobilizations of youth: The energetic tune of these compositions motivated young Indians toward discipline, sacrifice and nation building.

Thus, Vivekananda Sangeet helped transform nationalism from mere political resistance into a moral and spiritual movement.

b) Influence on Vedantic philosophy: Vivekanand Sangeet act as a musical exposition of Vedanta translating complex metaphysical ideas into emotional form.

i) Practical Vedanta: Swamiji's Sangeet is mainly focused on that theory where it said Vedant is not abstract speculation but a philosophy to be lived in action, courage and service.

ii) Unity of existence: The song recurrent themes such as oneness of the soul (Atman) and Brahma make listeners internalize non-dualism through feeling rather than logic.

iii)Philosophical democratisation: By setting vedantik ideas to music the sangeets made philosophy accessible to common people beyond monastic circles.

iv) Strength and fearlessness: like the divinity of the soul are musically rainforest, nurturing spiritual confidence.

In this way Swamiji Sangeet bridges philosophy and experience, allowing Vedanta to more from texts into the heart.

c) Contribution to Humanistic Ethic: The Global view of Vivekananda is centralised in humanism and his Sangeet poweredfully carries this ethical version.

i) Service: The sangeets specifically focused on that "daridra Narayana- service to humanity as Service to God" and it is possible to attend God through service to the people.

ii) Universal brotherhood: The sangeets promote compassion tolerance and inclusively by inspiring Vivekananda's believe in the unity of all religions and races.

iii) Individuals' dignity: Swamiji Sangeet reject the cast discrimination, social hierarchies and moral disappointment by affirming the divinity inherent in every human being.

iv) Ethics of action: Self-discipline, self- sacrifies, courage and social-responsibility are celebrated as ethical ideas.

So Vivekananda sangeet nurtures a humanism grounded in spirituality where ethical living flows from spiritual realisations.

d) Effects in sonic spirituality: Vivekananda Sangeet are filled with devotion and spiritual themes, can proudly impact one's spirituality. Here are some possible effects: -

i) Connection with inner soul: Each word of Swamiji's Sangeet touches the inner soul which spark introspection and salf awarness in human mind.

ii) Emotional attachment: The emotional depth of the sangeet created a strong attachment, fostering a sence of calm and peace.

iii) Spiritual upliftment: The devotional theme can uplift and inspire encouraging a part connection with the divine and uplift our soul from low state to upper spiritual state where it helps to know about 'Parmatma'.

iv) Mindfulness: The gentle melodies can induce a meditative state, promoting mindfulness and inner calm.

Aesthetic pedagogy: Vivekanand's Sangeet can enhance asthetic pedagogy by these steps:

i) Emotional connection: Swamiji Sangeet should relate to every Students by which they can attached with emotionally and everything is feeling easy to understand.

ii) Cultural relevance: Incorporating cultural elements to make learning mode contextual where it helps to make Students by socially, morally and culturally.

iii) Holistic learning: If any person hears or realises the Vivekananda's Sangeet buy controlling his/her senses, he/ she becomes more focused and more punctual in life.

iv) Inspiration: Through Vivekananda's message of empowerment and spirituality the youth of our society must be energised and inspired in their works.

Cultural modernity: The sangeet effects cultural modernity in various ways-

i) Blending tradition and modernity: Besides traditional Indian music with modern themes the Vivekananda Sangeet should be relevant to contemporary audiences. It helps to restrained people's bad nature, behaviours and bad thoughts and give a peaceful realisation.

ii) Cultural revival: Increase the cultural Revival in Indian classical music on spiritual themes and bring a Renaissance among the youth.

iii) Universal Apple: If there is a combination of high consciousness and deep understanding in Swamiji Sangeet, it reaches the love compassion and self- realisation in every people's mind.

iv) Social change: Having high level thinking, right lyrics and heart touchable tone in Swamiji Sangeet, it changed the society and the social Behaviour of people.

Conclusion:

In Swami Vivekananda's Sangeet we get a proper structure of Advaita Vedanta, higher consciousness and spiritual devotion in each word of his songs. The song is not only a method of relaxation but also a realisation of the connection between 'Atma' and 'Paramatma'.

Swamiji's Sangeet is best understood as a sonic manifesto of Advaita in action where sound awakens the soul, humanism, sanctifies social life. It is a true of which says as the perspective of swamiji "Each soul is potential define the goal is to manifest this divineity within." So, the songs continue as spiritual modernity and ethical renaissance till now in India.

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Myth and Memory : The Representation of Women in Indigenous Storytelling of Indian Culture

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Abstract

For cultural expression, identity preservation, and the generational transfer of age-old knowledge, indigenous storytelling is an essential means in India. The representation of women in Indian Indigenous stories is a profound and intricate subject that delves into the interplay of culture, identity, and history. Through oral traditions, myths, folktales, and contemporary narratives, these stories provide invaluable insights into the roles, perceptions, and experiences of women across diverse Indigenous communities in India. This exploration highlights not only the resilience and strength of women but also challenges dominant narratives shaped by colonial and patriarchal influences. This study also examines mythology and oral tradition that are integral to Indian culture, shaping its values, social structures, and historical consciousness. Indigenous storytelling reflects the roles and status of women, portraying them as goddesses, warriors, nurturers, and rebels. This paper explores the representation of women in Indian folklore, analysing their significance, spiritual authority, and societal implications, with a focus on figures like Draupadi, Sita, Mangal Chandi, and Hinglaj. It also examines how reinterpretation of these narratives impacts contemporary gender perspectives. The representation of women in Indian Indigenous stories is a testament to the resilience, strength, and complexity of Indigenous cultures. These narratives, rich in myth and memory, celebrate the diverse roles of women, challenge patriarchal and colonial stereotypes, and preserve vital cultural knowledge. As Indigenous communities continue to confront modern challenges, the stories of women play a crucial role in shaping identities and fostering a sense of belonging. By amplifying these voices and recognizing their significance, we contribute to a deeper understanding of the past, present, and future of Indigenous peoples in India. In essence, Indian Indigenous stories are more than mere tales; they are living embodiments of culture, identity, and resistance that resonate across generations, serving as powerful reminders of the integral role women play in the tapestry of life and society.

Objective of The Study

The various instruments and methods used in Indigenous storytelling in the Indian cultural setting, emphasizing their value in preserving the intricate web of India's numerous tribal and Indigenous societies. With more than 700 different tribes and many languages, India's storytelling traditions—which include oral storytelling, folklore, and performative arts—are as diverse as its civilizations. Indigenous storytelling in India encompasses a diverse range of traditions, each with its own unique characteristics, reflecting the multitude of languages, cultures, and histories across the subcontinent. From the oral traditions of tribal communities to the more codified versions found in texts like the Mahabharata and Ramayana, women's roles are depicted in various ways, often influenced by the socio-political contexts of the times.

Introduction

Indian mythology, with its rich tapestry of gods, goddesses, heroes, and cosmic events, plays a significant role in the broader context of Indigenous storytelling in India. Each Indigenous community possesses its own unique narratives and interpretations, often intertwined with local customs, natural environments, and spiritual beliefs. This intricate relationship between mythology and Indigenous storytelling not only preserves cultural heritage but also offers insights into the values, challenges, and worldviews of these communities. Indigenous storytelling is a rich and multifaceted tradition that encompasses a variety of cultures, languages, and histories. It is a tool for knowledge preservation, moral instruction, and cultural identity reinforcement in addition to being a source of entertainment

Historical Context

Historically, Indigenous women have held significant positions within their societies. They were often seen as the backbone of the community, responsible for nurturing, healing, and maintaining cultural practices. However, colonial influences have disrupted these roles, often marginalizing women's

voices and stories. This has led to a need for reclaiming and amplifying Indigenous women's narratives within storytelling. The paper begins with an examination of oral traditions, where storytelling serves not just as entertainment but as a medium for imparting moral lessons, historical accounts, and cultural values.

Digitalisation Of Indigenous Folktales

Modern technologies, showcasing how digital media, including social platforms and film, are being harnessed to document and disseminate Indigenous stories, thereby reaching broader audiences and revitalizing interest in these traditions. However, the paper also addresses the ethical considerations surrounding the appropriation and representation of Indigenous narratives in contemporary contexts. The paper highlights the persistence and dynamism of Indigenous cultures by illustrating the distinctive storytelling traditions and their adaptations to modern problems through case studies.

Cultural Context And Significance

Indigenous stories in India, encompassing a variety of ethnic and cultural groups, serve as repositories of cultural memory, preserving knowledge, values, rituals, and traditions. Women's roles in these narratives often reflect their significance as life-givers, nurturers, and custodians of cultural practices. Women have historically been the primary narrators and preservers of indigenous folklore and oral traditions in many Indian communities. In societies where patriarchy is dominant, women use storytelling as a means to pass on cultural knowledge, familial lineage, and spiritual beliefs. Women's narratives often centre around themes of fertility, motherhood, resilience, and community bonding. For instance, the Bhil and Gond tribes of central India have a strong tradition of storytelling led by women, who sing ballads and recite epics during festivals and gatherings. These stories highlight the struggles and triumphs of female protagonists, reinforcing the role of women in shaping cultural identity. Additionally, women use storytelling as a form of resistance against patriarchal norms, incorporating narratives of autonomy and agency in their tales.

Cultural Archetypes And Roles

Indian Indigenous stories often feature a range of archetypes that celebrate the complexity of women's roles, from caregivers to warriors. These archetypes serve to empower women and validate their experiences within their communities.

The Nurturer: Frequently depicted as a maternal figure, this archetype embodies compassion, care, and community. Women in these roles are often portrayed as the primary educators of cultural values, ensuring the transmission of traditions and practices to future generations.

The Warrior: Some narratives highlight women who take on roles traditionally associated with male warriors. These stories showcase their bravery and leadership in times of conflict, challenging conventional gender norms and illustrating the agency of women in protecting their communities.

The Wise Woman: Many Indigenous stories feature elder women who possess deep knowledge of herbal medicine, storytelling, and cultural practices. These figures are revered as guides, playing crucial roles in healing and teaching.

Case Study-1

The Mahabharata: Draupadi

Overview :

Draupadi, one of the central characters in the Mahabharata, is a symbol of fortitude, nuance, and tenacity. Her story begins with her birth from fire, which symbolizes purity and power.

Representation :

Draupadi's narrative addresses themes of honour, betrayal, and agency. After being humiliated in the Kaurava court, she challenges patriarchal norms by invoking justice and demanding her dignity. Her steadfastness and refusal to be silenced make her a symbol of resistance against oppression.

Cultural Impact :

Draupadi's story has inspired numerous interpretations in modern literature and performance art, often highlighting issues like gender violence and the quest for justice. Her character serves as a lens through which we can examine the evolving perceptions of women's roles in society.

Case Study-II

The Ramayana: Sita's Journey

Overview :

Sita, the wife of Lord Rama, is another pivotal female figure in Indian mythology. Her journey from abduction to rescue is filled with trials that test her fidelity and strength.

Representation :

Sita's character embodies the ideals of virtue and devotion, yet her trials also raise questions about agency and autonomy. Her willingness to undergo the Agni Pariksha (trial by fire) to prove her purity is both a testament to her loyalty and a critique of societal expectations placed on
women.

Cultural Impact :

Sita's story has been reinterpreted in various contemporary works, exploring themes of choice, sacrifice, and feminism. Modern adaptations often emphasize her strength and resilience, challenging traditional portrayals and encouraging discussions on women's rights and empowerment.

Spirituality And Indigenous Folktales

Other powerful female deities like Kali, Durga, and Saraswati further exemplify the role of the divine feminine, representing destruction of evil, valor, and wisdom, respectively.

Goddess Kamakhya, associated with fertility and female energy, is another significant deity worshipped in Assam. She is considered a symbol of womanhood, menstruation, and the cycle of life, highlighting the sacred aspects of femininity. Meenakshi of Madurai, a warrior goddess who ruled her kingdom with wisdom and strength, breaks the stereotypical expectations of women as passive figures. She is portrayed as a fierce ruler who later unites with Lord Shiva, symbolizing a balance of power between masculine and feminine forces.

The Ideal Woman: Sita And Draupadi

Legends of Sita and Draupadi exemplify different dimensions of femininity, each reinforcing or challenging societal ideals :

Sita (Ramayana) : Representing purity and devotion, Sita's trials, including her Agni Pariksha (trial by fire), highlight gendered expectations of virtue and sacrifice. She embodies the notion of unwavering loyalty, despite suffering great injustice at the hands of her husband and society. The narrative surrounding Sita has been used both to uphold traditional values and as a basis for feminist reinterpretation.

Draupadi (Mahabharata) : Unlike Sita, Draupadi challenges patriarchal authority. Her disrobing before the Kaurava court serves as a symbol of dignity and resistance while highlighting issues of injustice and humiliation. Draupadi's story is one of defiance—she refuses to accept her fate passively and actively demands justice, making her an enduring symbol of female empowerment.

Women Narratives And Power Dynamics

Indigenous storytelling often mirrors the socio-political structures of the community. In patriarchal societies, stories frequently depict men as protectors, warriors, and decision-makers, while women are portrayed as nurturers or symbols of sacrifice. However, in matrilineal communities, such as the Khasi and Garo tribes of Northeast India, narratives showcase powerful female figures who wield authority over land, lineage, and governance.

Intergenerational Transmission Of Gender Roles

Indigenous storytelling plays a critical role in the intergenerational transmission of gender roles. Young children learn about their expected societal roles through bedtime stories, folktales, and epic narratives. These tales often reinforce values such as bravery, sacrifice, wisdom, and nurturing, assigning them to specific genders. However, in more inclusive indigenous cultures, these roles are portrayed with flexibility, allowing for a broader spectrum of gender identities to be normalized from a young age.

1. Connection to the Land
2. Cultural Transmission
3. Strength and Resilience
4. Spirituality and Healing
5. Community Leadership

Digital Media As a Platform For Indigenous Folktales

Social media, YouTube, and podcasts are becoming new avenues for indigenous storytelling, allowing gender minorities to share their experiences and reinterpret traditional tales. Digital storytelling projects, such as those led by indigenous women's collectives, focus on bringing lesser-known stories of female and queer resilience to the forefront.

Challenges And Critiques

While many Indigenous stories celebrate women's strength, they can also reflect the complexities and contradictions of gender roles in society. Some narratives may reinforce traditional stereotypes or depict women in subservient roles. Given the historical context and the way these tales have evolved over time, it is imperative that we view these myths critically.

Conclusion

The evolution of gender narratives in indigenous storytelling not only enriches India's cultural heritage but also fosters inclusivity and representation, ensuring that all voices are heard and celebrated. By preserving these diverse gendered perspectives, India's indigenous storytelling continues to be a powerful tool for cultural expression and social change. The representation of women in indigenous storytelling in Indian culture is diverse, oscillating between reverence and subjugation. Mythology, folklore, and oral tradition provide contrasting depictions—while classical narratives often uphold patriarchal ideals, regional and tribal stories celebrate female strength and independence. Through reinterpretation, these stories continue to influence modern discussions on gender equality, reaffirming the role of storytelling in shaping cultural memory and social change

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Reinterpreting Draupadi: Femininity, Resistance, and the Construction of Selfhood In The Palace of Illusions and Koral Dasgupta's Draupadi

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Abstract:

Draupadi plays a significant role of character from the ancient Indian epic Mahabharata. Her story is still relevant today because it deals with issues like gender,resistance, and self-identity. This research paper studies how Draupadi is shown in two modern literary works: The Palace of Illusions by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Draupadi by Koral Dasgupta.

The paper explains how both writers present Draupadi as a strong and intelligent woman who questions unfair traditions. Through their stories, Draupadi is shown as someone who fights against patriarchal restrictions and tries to understand her own identity. Divakaruni highlights Draupadi's ability to think independently and challenge gender roles, while Dasgupta presents her as a powerful and courageous woman with a modern outlook.

The paper also revisits Draupadi's humiliation during the dice game in the royal court of Hastinapura, where she was treated unfairly because of her husband Yudhishthira's actions. This incident has been discussed many times in literature, and modern writers reinterpret it to show Draupadi's strength, dignity, and resistance.

Overall, the research shows how these two authors use Draupadi's character to explore themes of feminism, resistance, and self-realization, making her a symbol of strength and independence in a male-dominated society.

Keywords: *Draupadi, Feminism, Resistance, Gender, Self-identity, Patriarchal*

Introduction:

The story of Draupadi comes from the ancient Indian epic Mahabharata, written in Sanskrit, which narrates the events before and after the Kurukshetra war. Draupadi is one of the most important characters in the epic and plays a key role in shaping the narrative. She is the daughter of King Drupada of Panchala and is also known as Panchali and Yajnaseni, as she was born from a fire sacrifice. Draupadi becomes the wife of the five Pandava brothers—Yudhishthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva. One of the most significant events in her life is her humiliation in the royal court after Yudhishthira loses her in a game of dice. Contemporary writers revisit Draupadi's story to explore her strength, resistance, and identity, especially in male dominated societies.

The incident of Draupadi being humiliated in the royal court has been discussed many times by modern writers and researchers. They study what happened to her and how she reacted to the injustice. In modern literature, Draupadi's story is retold in new ways, which helps readers see her character from fresh perspectives.

Some important modern works on Draupadi include The Palace of Illusions by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Draupadi by Koral Dasgupta. These works focus on Draupadi's femininity, courage, and strength.

In The Palace of Illusions, Draupadi tells her own story in the first person. This helps readers understand her thoughts, emotions, and struggles more deeply. She is shown as a complex character who balances love, duty, and destiny while trying to survive in a patriarchal society.

Similarly, Koral Dasgupta's Draupadi presents a modern interpretation of the character. Draupadi is shown as honest, patient, strong, and dignified despite the many hardships she faces. She becomes a symbol of resistance and empowerment, especially for women who suffer injustice. In this text, Draupadi questions traditional roles assigned to women and asserts her individuality.

Both works highlight the timeless strength of feminine power and acts of resistance that have inspired people since the original story.

Themes of Femininity and Self-Identity in The Palace of Illusions:

From a feminist perspective, femininity and resistance are closely connected and provide rich material for study. Feminist theory explains femininity as a social construct shaped by customs, expectations, and roles assigned to women, rather than something natural or fixed.

Social, cultural, and historical factors strongly influence how femininity and self identity are formed, making them deeply connected. Femininity is understood through the roles, behaviours, and expectations imposed on women, which shape their sense of identity.

Draupadi, the central female character in The Palace of Illusions, retells the Mahabharata from a woman's perspective. Through her story, the novel explores gender roles and identity. Draupadi is strong-willed and intelligent. She questions traditions and refuses to accept injustice. Unlike the ideal image of a silent and obedient woman, Draupadi speaks openly and makes her own choices.

Throughout the story, Draupadi struggles between duty and desire, tradition and freedom. She challenges the male-dominated society and demands respect and justice. Her courage and confidence break the traditional image of women as weak and submissive. Thus, Draupadi stands as a symbol of resistance and self-identity beyond fixed gender roles.

Divakaruni presents Draupadi as a strong woman who challenges social rules and brings women's experiences to the center of the story. Draupadi does not accept the limits placed on her by society. Instead, she questions gender norms and asserts her identity, strength, and independence even during difficult situations. Through her interactions with male characters such as her husbands and the Kauravas, the novel shows how gender roles are created and controlled in a patriarchal society and how women suffer because of these power structures.

Draupadi's identity is shaped not only by her gender but also by caste and class. As the daughter of King Drupada and a princess of the Kuru dynasty, she enjoys social status and authority. However, being a woman in the Kshatriya caste also restricts her freedom. Divakaruni highlights how gender, caste, and class together influence Draupadi's life choices and experiences.

Through her interactions with people from different backgrounds—such as Brahmin priests, young girls, Krishna, and Kunti—Draupadi understands social hierarchies and her place within them. These relationships help her grow and discover herself.

Her marriages to the five Pandava brothers deeply affect how she sees herself and her role in the world.

Krishna plays an important role in Draupadi's life as a guide, mentor, and trusted friend. His support gives her confidence and emotional strength, helping her face challenges and take control of her life. At the same time, her marriages to the Pandavas bring both support and struggle. Living in a polygamous marriage forces her to deal with social expectations and limits her freedom in many ways.

Divakaruni shows Draupadi's courage most clearly during the dice game episode, when she is dragged into the royal court. There, Draupadi boldly questions the injustice done to her and demands respect and dignity. She refuses to be treated as an object and asserts her identity as a queen and a woman with self-worth.

Throughout the novel, Draupadi proves her ability to navigate complex power relationships. She clearly states that she will not be treated as shared property and insists on being an equal partner in her marriages. By portraying Draupadi as confident, questioning, and assertive, Divakaruni presents her as a symbol of resistance and female agency in a patriarchal society.

Draupadi's relationship with the Pandavas is complex. While they sometimes support her, they also limit her freedom and choices. In The Palace of Illusions, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni presents a deep exploration of female identity, individuality, and agency through Draupadi's character. Draupadi's understanding of womanhood, her questioning of gender roles, and her sense of identity develop as she goes on a journey of self-discovery. Through her struggles and interactions with others, she grows into a strong and independent woman who questions relationships and recognizes her own power within a patriarchal society. Divakaruni's portrayal of Draupadi's hardships and successes helps readers understand the strength and determination of women.

Resistance and Agency in Draupadi by Koral Dasgupta:

Koral Dasgupta's novel Draupadi focuses on resistance and agency within a patriarchal culture. Set in ancient India, the story retells the life of Draupadi from the Mahabharata and highlights her struggle against social pressures and male dominance. Dasgupta presents Draupadi as a rebellious figure who refuses to accept unfair traditions and societal expectations. The themes of struggle and rebellion are central to the story, showing Draupadi's firm decision to protect her freedom and dignity.

Draupadi represents resistance against an oppressive patriarchal system. Born from fire, she is shown as fearless and strong-willed from the beginning. She challenges traditional ideas of how women should behave and refuses to be submissive. Her rejection of practices such as blind obedience, forced loyalty, and restrictive marriage shows her refusal to accept injustice and inequality.

One of Draupadi's strongest forms of resistance is her voice. She openly speaks against injustice and refuses to remain silent. Whether confronting her husbands' unfair behavior or questioning the humiliation she faces in court, Draupadi boldly challenges wrong doing.

Draupadi also shows agency through her political awareness. She understands power relations and uses her intelligence and influence wisely. By forming alliances with powerful figures like Krishna, she strengthens her position and furthers her goals. In doing so, she breaks the limitations imposed on women and gains respect in a male dominated society.

Despite social restrictions, Draupadi plays an important role in shaping the political environment of her time.

Draupadi's journey was not easy.

When Draupadi stood up for her rights and refused to obey unfair rules, powerful people turned against her. Her resistance led to great personal loss, especially during the game of dice, where she suffered injustice at the hands of the Kauravas. Even though she paid a heavy price, Draupadi did not give up her values or beliefs just to gain social approval.

Koral Dasgupta's Draupadi presents her as a strong woman who questions power and injustice. Draupadi's courage and refusal to submit to patriarchal control highlight the strength of the human spirit. Her story urges readers to recognize oppression around them and to believe in their own ability to fight for justice and equality. In a world still shaped by patriarchy, Draupadi's story offers hope and strength, reminding us that true freedom is achieved through persistent and peaceful resistance.

Conclusion:

In the Mahabharata, Draupadi is not responsible for the war or for the mistakes of the Pandavas. The destruction that followed was the result of Duryodhana's misdeeds and the arrogance, ego, and ambition for power shared by both the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Draupadi should not be blamed for decisions taken by powerful men driven by pride and rivalry.

The epic clearly shows that war is never the answer. The Mahabharata proves this through the immense suffering it caused, just as history later confirmed through the First and Second World Wars, where innocent people paid the price for the hunger for power. Draupadi's humiliation did not create the war; it only exposed the moral collapse already present in the Kaurava court.

Draupadi was not the cause, but a tool within the larger political and patriarchal system that led to the war. The situation itself—marked by injustice, broken dharma,and power struggles—was more responsible than any single individual. Although the conflict was between members of the same family, countless people who had no connection to their rivalry suffered and died.

Thus, Draupadi stands not as a reason for the Mahabharata war, but as a symbol of injustice, whose suffering reveals that the real purpose of the war was power, not righteousness.

This research shows that Draupadi's legacy remains meaningful even today.

The study compares Draupadi's character in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's The Palace of Illusions and Koral Dasgupta's Draupadi, highlighting her strength, self awareness, and rebellious spirit.

Together, these portrayals break the idea of a single, fixed image of femininity and celebrate the diversity of women's experiences.

Resistance is a central theme in both works. Draupadi refuses to be silenced or controlled, whether by rejecting unfair customs or by demanding justice.

Draupadi bore an unjust and barren burden imposed upon her by patriarchal power structures.

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The Naga As Mucalinda: Buddhist Compassion, Ecological Interdependence, And The Protection of The Vulnerable in Girish Karnad's Nagamandala

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Abstract

Existing studies on Girish Karnad's Nagamandala have primarily focused on feminist, postcolonial, and mythological interpretations, with a few passing references to the play's ecocritical significance (Saindavi 2026; Singh 2026; Desai 2010). In this paper, the shape-shifting Naga is re-read within a Buddhist framework that highlights the Naga as the very essence of the Buddhist epic. Here, Nagamandala is seen as a direct derivative of the Buddhist legend of King Mucalinda, the Naga who protected the newly attained Buddha from raging storms, floods, and rains by the folds of his hood and the circumcoiling of his body. Through textual and textualological interpretations of the involvement of the Naga to protect Rani, in addition to Buddhist writings on Karuṇā (compassion), Pratityasamutpada (interdependence), and Ahinsā (non-violence), the paper also explores the Buddhist interpretations of the "anthill," "drain pipe" scenes, the "trial by fire" trope, the "hair" theme, and the two alternative conclusions. The paper posits that Girish Karnad's folkloric retelling of the myth leads us to a Buddhist interpretation of ecology that offers a critique of patriarchic anthropocentric suffering that is relevant in the contemporary debate on the depletion of groundwater tables, human–snake conflict, and the NEP-2020 emphasis on Indian Knowledge Systems.

Keywords: *Girish Karnad, Nagamandala, Mucalinda, Buddhist ecology, karuṇā, interdependence, nonhuman agency, human–snake conflict, IKS*

Introduction

Ecocriticism today focuses on the ways literature portrays interdependence, the compassion of the non-human, and the suffering involved in craving and dominating. In Indian dramatic literature, the treatment of myth in the works of Karnad has received feminist and postcolonial critical attention, but the ecological and transcultural background of the narrative, particularly the Buddhist dimension, has not received substantial attention. This has already started to change with the works of Saindavi (2026), discussing the regenerative powers of the snake energies of the Naga, and those of Singh (2026), focusing on the ethic of relationship in two dramas, and Desai (2010), placing it in the Vedic conservation ethic. This article does not focus on the Buddhist archetype of Mucalinda, the dual endings of the narrative as the models of compassionate refuge, or the relevance of the acts of protection of the Naga to contemporary water crisis or human and snake conflicts.

This paper bridges those gaps by interpreting the Naga text in its explicit form as Mucalinda, who emerges from underground water, protects the weak, and represents interdependence. It hypothesis that the folk Naga in Karnad's text exemplifies a Buddhist ecology ethic of compassion preserving without possessing, and contesting the dukkha of patriarchic anthropocentric alienation.

Aim and Objectives of the study:

Aim:

To demonstrate that the Naga in *Nagamandala* functions as a dramatic incarnation of Mucalinda, embodying Buddhist compassion and ecological interdependence.

Objectives:

1. To locate the Naga's actions (emergence, water-entry, protection, sacrifice) onto the Mucalinda archetype.
2. To show how Rani's relationship with the Naga exposes suffering caused by craving and domination.
3. To interpret the two endings as contrasting Buddhist responses to refuge and non-harm.

Methodology:

The approach will involve a close reading of *Nagmanadala* and then relating it to the Mucalinda Sutta, concepts of karuṇā and pratītyasamutpāda, ecocritical theory and empirical data on human–snake conflict and groundwater.

The Naga as Mucalinda: Compassionate Guardianship

In the Mucalinda Sutta, after enlightenment the Buddha sits beneath the Bodhi tree. A great storm arises. Mucalinda, the Naga king, rises from the earth, coils his body seven times beneath the Buddha to lift him above floodwaters, and spreads his hoods as shelter (Mucalinda Sutta). The storm passes; Mucalinda resumes human form, pays homage, and departs. The Buddha later praises this act of spontaneous, non-possessive protection.

Karnad's Naga enacts the same sequence with uncanny precision, mirroring the protective role of Mucalinda in Buddhist tradition. It rises from the "enormous ant-hill" (Karnad 253), serving as an earthly portal that parallels Mucalinda's emergence from subterranean realms during the storm. The Naga repeatedly enters the house "through the drain in the bathroom" (267, 270, 278), a literal water channel that echoes Mucalinda's rise amid the floodwaters to offer shelter. During the ordeal scene, when Rani faces threat and judgment, the Naga's hood shelters her (292, 294), directly mirroring the seven hoods Mucalinda spread to shield the Buddha from rain and wind (Mucalinda Sutta). In the hair motif—earlier described as "snake princesses" (270, 296)—the Naga ultimately finds permanent refuge, just as Mucalinda returns to his realm after providing protection without attachment. Furthermore, the Naga's lyrical speech on the monsoon mating season (46)—"the female begins to smell like the wet earth"—(276) collapses human desire into the nonhuman reproductive cycle, rejecting the possessive craving that Buddhism identifies as the root of suffering. Thus, the Naga's love for Rani is not driven by Appanna's possessive hunger but by Mucalinda's karuṇā: a protective, non-harmful, and ultimately self-effacing compassion that safeguards the vulnerable while embodying the principle of interdependence (Mucalinda Sutta).

Rani's Suffering and the Naga's Compassionate Intervention

Rani's initial state is classic Buddhist dukkha: locked inside the house, alienated from community, body, and natural world. Appanna leaves after lunch, "shuts the door, locks it from the outside and goes away," reducing her to solitary confinement where she confesses, "I am so frightened at night, I can't sleep a wink" (Karnad 254, 259). His cruelty—"Do as you are told, you understand?" and "I don't like idle chatter" (Karnad 254)—is the human counterpart of craving and ignorance. The Naga's intervention restores her fertility, agency, and emotional fullness—not through domination but through compassionate presence. After the night visits begin, the Naga explains, "the husband decides on the day visits. And the wife decides on the night visits" (Karnad 31). Her pregnancy announcement and the ordeal scene dramatise the shift from isolation to refuge: she declares she will "put [her] hand into the ant-hill… and pull out the King Cobra," and when she does so the cobra does not strike her (Karnad 56, 59, 62). She is lifted, protected, and ultimately empowered, exactly as Mucalinda lifted and sheltered the Buddha.

The Two Endings as Buddhist Ecological Parables

The two alternative endings of Nāga-Mandala function as powerful Buddhist ecological parables of refuge, impermanence, and continued interdependence. In the tragic ending, the rejected Naga, overwhelmed by Rani's return to her human husband, declares, "I am now no better than a grass snake… An empty sac of snake-skin" (Karnad 295), and strangles himself in her hair. The shed skin left behind becomes a stark reminder of impermanence (anicca) and the suffering caused by attachment and craving — the very dukkha that Buddhism teaches arises when compassionate refuge is rejected. In the happier ending, a live cobra suddenly falls from Rani's hair while Appanna combs it: "A live cobra falls out" (Karnad 297). Rani immediately protects it, saying, "This hair is the symbol of my wedded bliss. Live in there happily, for ever" (Karnad 300), and instructs that the dead snake be cremated with ritual honour, the fire lit by their son (Karnad 298). Rani's hair becomes the Naga's new refuge, echoing Mucalinda's return to his realm after offering shelter. The community's acceptance of the child born of the Naga affirms that true refuge integrates the nonhuman into human life — a living enactment of karuṇā and interdependence.

Contemporary Relevance and IKS

India faces acute human–snake conflict (tens of thousands of deaths yearly) and rapid groundwater depletion. Sacred groves and Naga worship historically preserved aquifers and biodiversity; both are now eroding. The Naga-as-Mucalinda offers a direct cultural counter-narrative: respect the serpent, honour subterranean waters, shelter the vulnerable, and you receive protection in return. Under NEP-2020's Indian Knowledge Systems mandate, *Nagamandala* becomes a living pedagogical text — Buddhist compassion embodied in Kannada folk theatre — that can foster ecological awareness far more powerfully than abstract policy.

Conclusion

Thus, if we re-read the story of the Naga as Mucalinda, the story of Nagamandala reveals itself not simply as a feminist folktale but as a Buddhist eco-fable: the compassion that protects without possessing, the interdependence that cures alienation, the refuge that survives the act of sacrifice. Karnad's drama thus transmits a tradition of Indic wisdom that spans Hinduism, Buddhism, and folklore—and directly addresses the Anthropocene challenge. We lock the door against nature; we unlock the door; the Naga-Mucalinda appears to shelter us anyway.

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Rewriting The Divine Feminine: Women, Power and Agencyin Myth through Shakti, Ganga and Mohini

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Abstract

Indian mythology, often perceived through patriarchal system, carrying with its powerful and complex representation of femininity that challenge reductive concept of women as passive or subordinate figures. This paper examines the portray of women in Indian myth through a focused study of Shakti, ganga and Mohini, three mythological figures who embody distinct yet interconnected dimensions of feminine power. The study focuses on these figures collectively redefine womanhood as dynamic, authoritative and transformative with the base of feminist myth criticism and New Historicist perspective.

Shakti emerges as the primordial cosmic force, assertive autonomous feminine authority without dependence on masculine power. Ganga, revered as a nurturing and purifying maternal figure, represents the containment and regulation of female power within patriarchal structures, revealing the tension between reverence and control. Mohini, Vishnu's female avatar, disrupt rigid gender binaries by employing illusion desire and fluid identity as tool of agency and resistance. Through comparative analysis the paper highlights how power, agency and femininity negotiated differently across these mythic narratives.

Keywords : *Indian Mythology, feminine power, Shakti, Ganga, Mohini, Feminist Criticism Myth Retellings*

Introduction

Across the cultures, Myths have functioned as mirrors of social values, cosmologies and cultural anxieties. The term 'myth' is etymologically derived from Greek word 'mythos' which means speech, so it refers to the spoken story of people which are based on their opinions and beliefs. Myths are the holy stories that connect with the experiences of the human being.

The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms mention that 'myth' is:

"A kind of story or rudimentary narrative sequence, normally traditional and autonomous, through which a given culture ratifies its social customs and accounts for the origins of human and natural phenomena, usually in supernatural or boldly imaginative terms. The term has wide range of meanings, which can be divided roughly into 'rationalist' and 'romantic' versions: in the first a myth is a false or unreliable story or belief, while in the second, 'myth' is a superior intuitive mode of cosmic understanding. In most literary context, the second kind of usage prevails and myths are regarded as fictional stories containing deeper truths, expressing collective attitude to fundamental matters of life, death, divinity and existence. (217-18)"

The creation of myths is regarded as the most important phenomenon in the cultural history of human kind. Myth is a religious story involving in a supernatural being such as God, Goddess and several such entities. Myths are symbolic stories of the distant past that concern cosmology.

Understanding Myth in the Indian Context

In the Indian cultural and literary tradition, the concept of *myth* transcends mere storytelling or fictional narration. It occupies a significant position in shaping religious, philosophical and socio-cultural thought. A Myth in Indian context can be broadly understood as a sacred narrative that seeks to explain the origin of cosmos, human existence, divine manifestation, moral codes and social practices. These narratives are deeply interwoven the collective consciousness of Indian people to inform both ritual practices and everyday life. Indian myths are primarily preserved and transmitted through conical texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Itihas (The Ramayan and The Mahabharat) and Puranas, as well as Through oral traditions, regional folklore, temple architecture, dance, music and contemporary literary adaptions. Indian Myths are

treated as a *Paramarthika Satya* (higher Truths) rather than *Vyavaharik Satya* (Empirical truth). They are not necessarily bound to historical or chronological accuracy but are valued for their metaphysical depth and symbolic resonance.

Women In Myth

Indian mythology constitutes a vast and layered narrative tradition in which metaphysical philosophy, cultural memory and social ideology converge. Unlike many mythological systems where femineity figures remain peripheral or symbolic, Indian myth places women and goddess at the very center of cosmic functioning, moral order and spiritual evolution. from the Vedas and Upanishads to the puranas and epic traditions, the feminine principal Shakti as an envisioned not merely as a companion to the masculine but as a primal force that animates creation, preservation and destruction. Thus, in Indian context Myth becomes a powerful medium through which gender, power and agency are imagined, negotiated and continually rewritten.

In Indian mythological traditions, femineity is neither singular nor static. Instead, it is fluid, multi-dimensional and deeply embedded in cosmic, social and moral orders. The Divine Feminine in Indian Mythology appears in multiple forms – nurturer and destroyer, river and seductresses, mother and enchantress- each embodying a unique form of power. Figures such as a Shakti, Ganga and Mohini challenges reductive interpretation of womanhood by transcending binaries of purity and desire, submission and dominance. Their narratives disrupt patriarchal hierarchies by positioning a feminine energy as an autonomous, dynamic and indispensable to cosmic balance. Therefore, mythological women are not passive subjects of divine will but active agents shaping destiny, ethics and divine order.

Statement:

Shakti, ganga and Mohini represent three distinct yet interconnected dimension of womanhood in Indian Mythology- cosmic power, nurturing sacrifice and subversive desire – challenging patriarchal readings of myth and reclaiming female agency, autonomy and complexity.

This research paper "Rewriting the Divine Feminine: Women, Power and Agency in Myth through Shakti, Ganga and Mohini" by foregrounding women's power and agency reveal through the mythological figures of Shakti, ganga and Mohini.

Theoretical Framework

This study applies a feminist myth criticism approach, which analyze how myths represent gender, power and agency. As per Marianne McDonald and P. Lal opinions, Feminist myth criticism examines how female figures in myth reinforce, subvert or challenge patriarchal norms. (McDonald 12; Lal45) Moreover, New Historicist readings situate these myths within their socio-cultural formation, recognizing that mythic figures reflect and shape historical understandings of the gender roles.

Shakti: Embodiment of Cosmic Power

Shakti, literally translated as "Power or Energy" is the fundamental force stimulating the universe in Hindu cosmology. Unlike many mythic narratives where feminine divinity is imitative of male gods, Shakti is autonomous and generative in her own right. In text like Devi Mahatmya, Shakti is not a supporting character bub the protagonist who combats cosmic imbalance and defeats demonic forces that male gods cannot vanquish alone (Kinsley 98)

The multiple form of Shakti - appearing as Durga, Parvati, Kali illustrates that a womanly power cannot be confined to a singular archetype. For example, Durga is a warrior of goddess whose lion mount signifies unrestrained strength. Kali embodies destructive energies that rupture complacent orders (Kinsley 112) These forms interrupt the assumption that female divinity is a passive or secondary. The Devi Mahatmya celebrates Shakti's creative and destructive capacities, asserting her as the 'Adi Parashakti (The Supreme Power).

Shakti and her manifestation

Shakti exists in multiple forms, each representing different aspects of feminine power and agency. As Usas, she embodies freedom and uninhibited sexuality, which becomes a source of conflict with the divine patriarchy. Her transformation into Durga, follows her humiliation and assault by Brahma, representing the

emergence of protective feminine rage. As Kali, she manifests as the ultimate destroyer of oppressive forces "delighting in Chaos" while serving justice. These manifestation presents not as a separate entity but as a facet of a complex feminine complex consciousness that adapts to meet the challenges of each era. This approach aligns with contemporary feminist interpretation of goddess worship that emphasizes the multifaceted nature of female power.

The author of the novel *Shakti* is Anuja Chandramouli who revolves central theme around challenging patriarchal narratives within mythological discourse. Chandramouli uses the goddess story to address the contemporary issues of women's rights, sexual autonomy and resistance to oppression. The narrative draws explicit: analogies with the modern-day situation of women and a contain a powerful message of woman empowerment". Shakti stands as a symbol for its explicitly feminist orientation and its sophisticated engagement with its complex social and religious terms.

The Goddess Shakti embodies cosmic power in Hindu thought, venerated but also contained with patriarchal structures. Chandramouli reclaims Shakti as a fierce, autonomous figure, shifting her from symbol to subject. In modern Feminist discourse, Shakti becomes a metaphor for Women's empowerment, challenging cultural narratives that simultaneously worship and suppress the feminine.

Ganga: Purity, Transgression and Agency

Ganga's myth blends motifs of purity, maternal care and subversive power. As the personifies river, Ganga embodies both physical life-giving sustenance and spiritual purification. In the Mahabharat, the descent of the Ganga to the earth is both a sacred event and a narrative of complex familial agency (Hiltebeitel 75). When King Shantanu sees Ganga, he is captivated by her beauty and asks her to marry him. However, ganga's conditions and her eventual departure after bearing sons reflect a character that negotiates her own terms, unsettling of narratives of submission.

The story of Ganga Draws from Hindu Scriptures and Epics especially the Vedas, Mahabharat and Puranas from her miraculous birth to her descent to the earth. Ganga is depicted as the daughter of Himavat (The mountain King) and Mena, sister to Parvati and as having complex relationship with deities including Shiva, Vishnu and Saraswati.

Historical myths explored

Ganga is not a linear chronicle but a tapestry interweaving myths, historical traditions and cultural beliefs. Ganga stands as a independent outspoken and embodying a fluid, untamable spirit She resists conformity, questions unjust norms and challenges the roles imposed on women, even among the gods. The idea of ganga's agency navigates divine politics, supports her sister Parvati and stands in solidarity with other goddess, particularly Saraswati reinforcing themes of sisterhood and independence.

Ganga as a Purifier

Ganga's mythological role as a purifying river who offers moksha(liberation) to saints and sinners alike is consistently emphasized. She transforms the dead and the sinful but her water can also overwhelm and destroy. Her maternal identity- embodied in the story of Bhishma (Who later becomes a central warrior in the Mahabharat)- complicates notions of femininity and power. Although she relinquishes her children upon birth, her narrative reflects a sovereignty in choices often denied to women in patriarchal society.

Modern Perspective

Ganga functions both within and beyond traditional feminine archetypes. She nurtures and destroys, resides in the sacred and untamed and asserts autonomy in her decisions. Her myth exemplifies how divine women are not merely symbolic of purity but enact agency within narrative spaces that wrestles with ethical, social and cosmic orders.

Anuja Chandramouli, the author of the novel Ganga: The Constant Goddess, infuses the story with a contemporary voice, raising question about patriarchy, social conditioning and the burden of blame placed on women across ages. Ganga is not only a goddess river but also a symbol of civilization in Indian culture. Chandramouli highlights the paradox of Ganga as life giver and destroyer, reflecting the ambivalence of nature and divinity.

Mohini: Fluid and Subversion of Patriarchy

Mohini is one of the most fascinating figures in Indian mythology precisely because she embodies gender fluidity and metamorphic power. The name "Mohini" derives from the Sanskrit root "Moha" which means to delude, enchant or illusion In traditional Hindu cosmology, mohini appears during the pivotal Samudra Manthan episode, where she emerges to distribute the nector of immortality to the Devas while deceiving the Asuras. Mohini appears in the Vishnu Purana and other Puranic Texts as the enchanting female form of the god Vishnu, who uses her allure to deceive demons and distribute the elixir of immortality(amrita) to the gods (Doniger 164). In this guise, Mohini is not a passive beauty but an active strategist whose gendered form is deployed as a weapon and a means of a cosmic balance.

The legend of Mohini distributing *amrit* reverses typical gendered power assumptions. Here, beauty and allure are not secondary traits but a tool of tactical power. Mohini's potency lies in her ability to transcends fixed gender categories; she is both divine and seductive, strategic and subversive. This gender fluidity challenges binary representations of divine figures and prompts reinterpretations of gender as performance rather than essence.

The intention behind Mohini to uncovers how this myth destabilizes rigid gender binaries, revealing historical traditions of fluidity and queerness in Hindu Culture.

Comparative Discussion: Agency, Resistance, Embodiment

Through Shakti, Ganga and Mohini, female divinity in Indian myth resists singular categorization. Each figure disrupts traditional patriarchal narratives in distinct ways

Shakti represents foundational creative and destructive energies that exceed hierarchical subordination.

Ganga navigates dual roles as a nurturer and transformative force, embodying autonomy within familial and cosmic structures.

Mohini reconfigures gender power by deploying femininity as an agentive strategy rather than a passive role.

Together these figures expand the conceptualization of feminine divine power beyond reproductive or relational functions. Their narratives illustrates that women in myth are active participant in cosmic, ethical and existential domains. These mythic forms do not merely reflect cultural values about women; they actively shape the discourse on how power, identity and resistance are conceived.

Conclusion

Rewriting the divine feminine through the myth of shakti, Ganga and Mohini reveal a tapestry of female power that is dynamic, multilayered and resistant to reductive interpretations. These figures redefine agency beyond patriarchal limitation and invite both scholarly and cultural engagement with myth as a living discourse. Their narrative continues to resonate in contemporary attempts to reclaim and retellings the role of women in sacred and social realms. By foregrounding female autonomy, transformation and fluid embodiment, these mythic figures provide enduring models for understanding the divine feminine as powerful, autonomous and agentive

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Portraits of Women in Indian Mythology

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During the process of evolution and progress of civilizations all over the world, human beings have developed certain beliefs, based on the geographical area and culture of that concerned society. That is why we come across different kinds of gods, goddesses, demons and stories related to them. The story of creation of the universe is different in different cultures and religions. These stories, which are believed to be true by people, appear in religious scriptures. Each of these stories is considered as a myth. While the term 'mythology' refers to the collection of myths of a whole society or religion. For example, Hindu Mythology, Christian Mythology and Greek Mythology are some of the mythologies which contains myths related to religion.

The study of myths through contemporary viewpoint is indispensable for their reinterpretation along with the analysis of arts, fine arts, history, science, and languages.

'Mythography' is a term used for such study. Modern myth criticism is bound to be interdisciplinary as various aspects like social, psychological and linguistic evolutions as well as anthropological dimensions are taken into consideration during study.

As women are the backbone of society, their position as well as the treatment they receive in the daily chores of life, reflects the overall mindset of that society. Therefore, the study of myths, bearing in mind women's position particularly is also crucial today. In Indian context, we can set out for this study, right from the Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads to famous epics like 'The Ramayana' and 'The Mahabharata'.

The famous women characters from these religious scriptures and epics, who have turned into myth, have been influential even today. Their study in today's perspective will reveal whether the status of women has deteriorated or has made advancements, over the span of thousands of years. In this paper, I have tried to revise and reinterpret some of the myths related to women in Indian mythology.

1. Savitri

The story of Savitri and Satyavana is very famous in Indian culture. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh wrote a book *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol* on this famous story. He described the work as a 'symbolic epic of the aim of supramental Yoga'. (Sri Aurobindo: 272). In this epic poem, "Sri Aurobindo arrived at his own conclusions regarding the meaning of the legend and called his own creation *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol.* (Pandit, 2000: pg. 5-6).

Savitri, daughter of King Aswapati of Madras, was allowed to have regular education along with armour training. She had also studied medicine and had great knowledge as a healer. Her parents had given her freedom to choose her husband. She chose Satyavana, an exiled prince as her husband despite Sage Narad Muni's warning that he would die in a year.

On the predicted day, Lord Yama came to claim Satyavana's soul. Savitri followed him and impressed him with her wisdom and devotion. Yama offered her beans, pleased by her intellect. Savitri cleverly asked for the restoration of her father-in-law's sight and kingdom, and for herself to bear a hundred sons. As she could have sons only with Satyavana, Yama was compelled to return Satyavana to life. This version of the myth of Savitri takes place on spiritual level as Savitri could leave her body on the earth with yogic power & followed god Yama in the form of a soul. She returned with the soul of Satyavana. Her story symbolizes perseverance, fidelity, wisdom and devotion.

The myth can be reinterpreted as Savitri's victory over death on her own. She, as a doctor, treated Satyavana with strict medicinal treatment, yoga and naturopathy. She sat under a banyan tree with Satyavana lying on the earth. The banyan tree has many medicinal uses as its bark, leaves and roots have been used for

centuries to treat various aliments as well as it is a supplier of oxygen in abundance. Savitri brought back Satyavana with her knowledge and devotion.

So, it is need of time, to spread this side of her story along with the traditional one. This story has attached cultural significance to banyan tree in Hinduism. A festival called 'Vat Savitri' is celebrated in Maharashtra when women worship banyan tree and prey for husband's long life.

2. Ganga

Ganga is the famous river known for its purity and sanctitude. In the epic, 'The Mahabharata', she is personified and actually takes part in events of mortal people, like other gods & goddesses.

King Shantanu, deeply in love with Ganga, asked her hand in marriage. She accepted his proposal but put one condition. She asked him not to intervene in any of decisions she would take in course of time. King Shantanu accepted this condition. Subsequently, she gave birth to seven children but immediately drowned them in the river. King Shantanu witnessed these events but didn't ask for explanations. When she was about to drown their eight child, he stopped her. Then Ganga told him the story of Ashwatthama and their curse. She wanted to liberate them from the curse so she drowned them after they were born. Devvasata or 'Bhishma' was the last one who suffered all his life and led a cursed life. Ganga then left King Shantanu and went to her heavenly abode.

This mythical story can be understood in different perspectives too. Shantanu, as his name suggests, was unable to produce healthy children physically. All of their seven sons were debilitated physically and couldn't survive as healthy human beings. So, Ganga liberated them by drowning them in the river. Bhishma, the eighth child, was physically and mentally healthy, so he survived and served the nation.

We can reinterpret the myth in this way also. As common people can't be persuaded to understand these facts, the stories appear in the form of myth.

3. Gandhari

Gandhari, wife of King Dhritarashtra, was a beautiful princess of the kingdom Gandhar. When Pitamah Bhishma asked her hand for blind Dhritarashtra, she was very hurt. She put a strip of clothes on her eyes for lifetime to equal herself with her husband. She was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. When the final war was being fought on Kurukshetra, in order to protect Duryodhana from Bheema, she asked Duryodhana to come naked before her. As she had gathered power in her eyes because of her fidelity towards her husband, she wanted to transfer that power to Duryodhana's body by having a glance at him. But Shri Krishna intervened in the way and asked Duryodhana to wear at least a cloth on waist. Duryodhana did the same. As his left thigh remained vulnerable, Bheema attacked that one, causing his death.

This myth is very popular related to Gandhari showing blind love for a son, responsible for the destruction of the entire Kaurava family.

4. Draupadi

Draupadi, the wife of five Pandavas and daughter of King Drupada, was an exceptional lady. Her birth was not natural as she appeared from the flames of Yadnya performed by King Drupada. Her life was full of many dramatic situations related to her unparalleled beauty and talent. She is one of the 'Panch-Kanyas' to be worshipped every morning though she was the wife of five Pandavas. She is considered as a pure and chaste woman.

Saptorshi Das aptly describes her as:

'…..If *Mahabharata* is an intricately woven saga of hatred and love, bloodshed and noble thoughts, beauty and gentleness, victory and defeat, then Draupadi is the shining jewel, casting the shadow of her towering personality over the epic poem, and the all destroying war described.' (Das, 2014: 231)

There is a famous myth about Draupadi's thali. Thali means 'plate'. It refers to the Akshaya Patra (inexhaustible vessel) which was used by Draupadi to feed guests every day until she herself had eaten. This Patra was granted to Yudhishthira by the Sun God, Surya while they were in exile. The vessel would provide an unending supply of food each day till Draupadi had finished her own meal. Duryodhana conspired to send Durvasa Rishi, a short-tempered sage & his large retinue to Pandavas hermitage at a time they knew Draupadi would have already eaten, seeking to curse the Pandavas. Draupadi, in distress, prayed to Lord

Krishna for help. Lord Krishna immediately came and ate the last piece of rice stuck to the vessel & announced that he was satisfied. Lord Krishna is the incarnation of Lord Vishnu who looks after the Universe which caused Durvasa Rishi and his disciples to become satiated. Thus, the idiom 'Draupadi's Thali' is very famous in Indian culture, highlighting hospitality, devotion and divine protection.

5. Seeta

Seeta, the wife of Shri Ram0, was the daughter of King Janaka. She is also called 'Janaki' after her name. Like Draupadi, there are stories about Seeta's birth and death which are believed to be true even today. According to "Ramayana', King Janaka found a box while ploughing the field after performing Yadnya (Vedic fire rituals). There was a baby girl inside it. King Janaka adopted her and named her 'Seeta'. As she was found inside land, she was considered as 'Bhoomikanya', the daughter of Dharati Mata.

Like her birth, Seeta's departure from the earth was also not natural. When she was asked to pass through the fire by Shree Ram, she called her mother to take her away. At her call, the earth in that Sanja got divided and Mother Earth took her away.

Though Seeta was a princess and queen, her life was full of difficulties and challenges. Her life itself is more than a myth.

6. Ahilya

Ahilya was the wife of a great sage, Gautam Rishi. She was very beautiful and well-known as a virtuous wife, 'Pativrata'. As Lord Indra was enchanted by her beauty, in the disguise of Gautam Rishi, he seduced her. When Gautam Rishi came to know this by his divine sight, he cursed Ahilya to become a rock. Je also cursed Indra to have a thousand genitals (yonis) on his body for his deceitful act with Ahilya. The thought genitals were later transformed into a thousand eyes by divine intervention, leading to the epithet 'Sahasraksha'.

I think that Ahilya was not turned into an actual rock by the curse but her life became stoic and stagnant like a rock. When Shree Ram forgave her by touching her, she came to life and reunited with the Parabrahma.

All the women characters portrayed above, from the epics, 'The Ramayana' and 'The Mahabharata' played noteworthy roles not only in their personal lives but also in that of society. They were not more idols to be directed by their families but had their own logic of intellect. They raised questions at the times of injustice instead of being mute. The lives of all these women were full of challenges and hardships but with great spirit, adventurousness, devotion, fidelity and firm belief in truth, they emerged victorious out of adversity. This is why they have turned into myths. Their stories have become universal and have been universalized. Their lives provide us a glimpse of prevalent society, urging us to contemplate over the contemporary society in which we live today.

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A Feminist Reading of Sita in the Ramayana

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Abstract

Indian mythology has significantly shaped cultural values, social norms, and gender roles in Indian society. The Ramayana, attributed to Valmiki, is one of the most influential epics in Indian tradition and presents Sita as the ideal woman—obedient, devoted, and morally pure. Traditionally, Sita has been celebrated as a symbol of patience, sacrifice, and chastity. However, such interpretations often overlook her suffering, silencing, and lack of agency within a deeply patriarchal social structure. This research paper offers a feminist reading of Sita's character, examining how patriarchal norms shape her life and identity. By analyzing key episodes such as her marriage, exile, abduction, trial by fire, and final rejection, the paper argues that Sita's suffering is not divinely ordained but socially constructed. The study reinterprets Sita not merely as a submissive wife but as a woman who displays inner strength, moral autonomy, and resistance within oppressive circumstances. A feminist reinterpretation reveals Sita as a powerful symbol of endurance and silent protest against patriarchal injustice.

Keywords: *Sita, Ramayana, Feminism, Patriarchy, Female Identity, Mythology, Gender Roles, Resistance*

Introduction

Mythology plays a crucial role in shaping social consciousness and moral values. In Indian culture, the *Ramayana* is not merely a religious text but a foundational narrative that defines ideals of dharma, duty, and gender roles. The epic has been repeatedly retold, translated, and adapted across centuries, reinforcing its authority in shaping cultural norms. Central to the *Ramayana* is the character of Sita, who has traditionally been idealized as the epitome of womanly virtue.

Sita is often portrayed as obedient, self-sacrificing, and unwaveringly devoted to her husband *Rama*. While such traits have been glorified, they also reinforce patriarchal expectations imposed on women. Sita's suffering—exile, abduction, public scrutiny, and abandonment—has been normalized as part of her duty as a wife. Feminist criticism challenges this glorification of female suffering and seeks to recover women's suppressed voices.

This research paper attempts a feminist reinterpretation of Sita's character by examining how patriarchal power operates in the *Ramayana*. It aims to move beyond the traditional image of Sita as a passive sufferer and explore her experiences as a woman navigating oppression, dignity, and moral strength within a patriarchal framework.

Aims and Objectives

The objectives of this research paper are:

1. To analyze the representation of Sita in the *Ramayana* from a feminist perspective
2. To examine patriarchal values that govern Sita's life and choices
3. To reinterpret Sita's suffering as socially constructed rather than divinely justified
4. To highlight Sita's inner strength, moral autonomy, and resistance
5. To explore the contemporary relevance of Sita's experiences

Research Methodology

This study adopts a **feminist critical approach** to analyze Sita's character.

- **Primary Source:**
  Valmiki's Ramayana (English translations)
- **Secondary Sources:**
  Scholarly books, journal articles, and critical essays on feminism, mythology, gender studies, and Indian epics.

The research employs close textual analysis, interpretative reading, and critical discussion of major episodes in Sita's life, focusing on gender, power, and identity.

Review of Literature

Traditional interpretations of the Ramayana present Sita as an ideal woman whose virtue lies in obedience and sacrifice. Classical commentators emphasize her chastity and devotion, often overlooking the injustices she suffers. However, modern scholars have begun to question these interpretations.

Iravati Karve views Sita as a woman trapped between personal dignity and social expectations. Romila Thapar argues that Sita's trials reflect patriarchal anxiety about female purity. Feminist critics reinterpret Sita's silence not as weakness but as a response to systemic oppression. Contemporary writers and retellings challenge the notion of Sita as submissive and highlight her emotional resilience and moral independence. These critical perspectives provide a foundation for a feminist reinterpretation of Sita's character.

Analysis and Discussion

1. **Sita's Birth and Symbolic Identity :** Sita's birth from the earth (Bhumi) is highly symbolic. She is not born from a woman's womb but emerges from the soil, symbolizing fertility, resilience, and endurance. This connection with the earth establishes Sita as a powerful natural force rather than a fragile woman. Ecologically Sita connects with Nature.

   Despite this symbolic strength, patriarchal narratives gradually reduce Sita to a possession transferred from father to husband. Her identity becomes defined by male relationships rather than her individuality.

2. **Marriage and Loss of Agency :** Sita's marriage to Rama through the *swayamvara* appears to offer her a choice, yet her agency remains limited. The contest is designed to select a worthy husband rather than allow Sita to express personal desire. Once married, Sita willingly follows Rama into exile, a decision often glorified as devotion.

   From a feminist perspective, this act reflects internalized patriarchy, where women are conditioned to prioritize male duty over personal safety. Sita's exile underscores the expectation that a wife's identity must align entirely with her husband's fate.

3. **Abduction and Objectification :** Sita's abduction by Ravana is one of the most traumatic episodes in the Ramayana. While Ravana is portrayed as the villain, feminist criticism shifts attention to how Sita's body becomes the site of male conflict. Her abduction symbolizes the objectification of women as trophies in patriarchal power struggles.

   Despite captivity, Sita resists Ravana's advances and asserts her moral autonomy. Her refusal to submit highlights her strength and self-respect, challenging the notion of female helplessness.

4. **Trial by Fire: Patriarchal Anxiety about Purity :** The *Agnipariksha* (trial by fire) is the most controversial episode in Sita's life. Rama demands proof of Sita's purity to satisfy public opinion, prioritizing social reputation over marital trust. This moment exposes the deep-rooted patriarchal obsession with female chastity.

   Sita's submission to the trial is often misinterpreted as obedience. Feminist reading reveals it as a tragic consequence of patriarchal coercion, where a woman must publicly prove her worth to retain dignity.

5. **Second Exile and Silencing of the Female Voice :** Even after passing the *Agnipariksha*, Sita is abandoned again due to public suspicion. Pregnant and alone, she is exiled to the forest, revealing the

fragility of women's security in patriarchal societies. Rama's decision underscores how women are repeatedly sacrificed to preserve male honor and social order.

In the ashram of Valmiki, Sita raises her sons independently, demonstrating self-reliance and maternal strength. Her silence during this phase is not submission but emotional withdrawal from an unjust system. Sita was a powerful mother.

6. **Final Return to Earth: An Act of Resistance :** Sita's final act—returning to the earth—is often viewed as tragic resignation. However, feminist interpretation sees it as an act of resistance. By refusing further trials, Sita rejects patriarchal authority and reclaims her dignity.

   Her return to Bhumi symbolizes liberation from oppressive structures and asserts her autonomy. It is a powerful statement against endless testing of female virtue.

Sita as a Feminist Symbol

Though not a feminist in the modern sense, Sita embodies feminist consciousness through her endurance, moral integrity, and refusal to internalize guilt. Her suffering exposes the injustices of patriarchal systems rather than validating them.

Sita's story invites readers to question traditional ideals of womanhood and recognize the emotional and psychological costs imposed on women in the name of virtue and honor.

Contemporary Relevance

Sita's experiences resonate strongly in contemporary society, where women continue to face moral policing, victim-blaming, and social scrutiny. Feminist reinterpretations of *Sita* challenge regressive gender norms and encourage re-evaluation of cultural ideals.

Modern retellings portray Sita as assertive and self-aware, reflecting changing attitudes toward gender equality. Her story remains relevant as a critique of patriarchal injustice.

Conclusion

This research paper concludes that Sita's portrayal in the *Ramayana* is deeply shaped by patriarchal ideology. A feminist reading reveals that her suffering is not divinely ordained but socially imposed. Sita emerges not merely as a passive victim but as a woman of immense inner strength and moral autonomy.

By reinterpreting Sita through a feminist lens, this study challenges traditional glorification of female suffering and highlights the need to question cultural narratives that normalize gender injustice. Sita remains a powerful symbol of endurance, resistance, and dignity, making her one of the most significant female figures in Indian mythology.

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Neglected Heroes in the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*

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Abstract:

The Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata present numerous heroic characters who shape the moral and cultural values of Indian society. While central heroes such as Rama, Krishna, and

Arjuna receive significant attention, many important characters remain neglected despite their vital contributions. This research paper explores selected unsung heroes including Shatrughna, Urmila, Nal, Neel, Vidura, Vikarna, and Karna. Through literary analysis, the study highlights their qualities of sacrifice, loyalty, wisdom, courage, and righteousness. The research aims to show that heroism is not limited to battlefield success but is also reflected in moral strength, emotional endurance, and ethical commitment. By examining these overlooked characters, the paper provides a deeper understanding of the ethical richness and human values embedded within the two great Indian epics.

Keywords: *Neglected heroes, Indian epics, Ramayana, Mahabharata, moral heroism, sacrifice, ethical values, unsung characters, righteousness (dharma), cultural ethics*

Introduction:

The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are two foundational epics of Indian literature that have deeply influenced Indian culture, religion, and philosophy. These texts narrate grand stories of duty, devotion, righteousness, and moral struggle. While the central figures such as Rama,Krishna, Arjuna, and Bhima dominate the narrative, several other characters contribute significantly to the development of the story and its ethical dimensions. Unfortunately, many of these characters receive limited attention and remain overshadowed by the primary heroes.

These neglected heroes often display extraordinary virtues such as self-sacrifice, loyalty, moral courage, and wisdom. Their actions shape key events and reinforce the moral framework of the epics. This research paper aims to study selected unsung heroes from both epics and analyze their contributions, thereby offering a broader and more inclusive understanding of heroism.

Neglected Heroes in the Ramayana:

Shatrughna: The Devoted Brother. Shatrughna, the youngest son of King Dasharatha, is one of the most overlooked characters in the *Ramayana*. He remains deeply devoted to his brother Bharata and plays an important role in supporting the administration of the kingdom. Shatrughna demonstrates remarkable bravery when he defeats the demon Lavanasura, thus protecting the people and restoring peace. His quiet loyalty and dedication reflect a form of heroism rooted in service rather than glory.

Urmila: The Silent Symbol of Sacrifice:

Urmila, the wife of Lakshmana, represents one of the highest forms of sacrifice in the *Ramayana*. When Lakshmana accompanies Rama and Sita into exile, Urmila remains in Ayodhya, enduring separation and loneliness. Her emotional strength and patience highlight the silent suffering often borne by women. Though her sacrifice is rarely celebrated, Urmila embodies resilience, devotion, and selflessness, making her a true unsung heroine.

Nal and Neel: The Visionary Builders:

Nal and Neel, two skilled vanara engineers, play a decisive role in constructing the bridge across the ocean to Lanka. Their intelligence and leadership enable Rama's army to cross the sea and confront Ravana. Their contribution illustrates that strategic thinking and cooperation are as essential as physical strength in

achieving victory. Their role reflects intellectual heroism and teamwork, often overshadowed by battlefield valor.

Neglected Heroes in the Mahabharata Vidura: The Moral Guide : Vidura stands as one of the wisest and most ethical characters in the *Mahabharata*. As an advisor to King Dhritarashtra, he consistently promotes justice, peace, and moral responsibility. His teachings, known as Vidura Niti, emphasize ethical leadership and human values. Despite his wisdom, Vidura remains marginalized due to his social position. His unwavering commitment to righteousness makes him a powerful symbol of moral heroism.

Vikarna: The Voice of Conscience: Vikarna, a lesser-known Kaurava prince, displays extraordinary moral courage during the infamous disrobing of Draupadi. He openly condemns the injustice committed against her, standing alone against his own family. His fearless protest highlights the importance of ethical resistance and moral clarity. Though he ultimately fights on the Kaurava side, his ethical stand distinguishes him as a righteous and neglected hero.

Comparative Perspective : Both epics present heroism in diverse forms. While famous warriors dominate the narrative, characters like Urmila, Vidura, and Vikarna demonstrate that moral courage, patience, and ethical strength are equally heroic. These neglected figures emphasize the importance of inner strength and selfless duty. Their stories expand the concept of heroism beyond physical conquest,highlighting emotional endurance and moral conviction.

Conclusion:

The neglected heroes of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* represent the deeper moral and emotional layers of these epics. Their sacrifices, loyalty, wisdom, and ethical courage offer valuable lessons for contemporary society. Recognizing these unsung figures enriches our understanding of Indian mythology and reinforces the idea that true heroism lies in righteousness, compassion, and moral responsibility. Through this research, it becomes evident that greatness is often found in silent service rather than public recognition.

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शक्ति से शील तक : पुरानी मिथकों में नारी पात्रों की भूमिका और संवेदना

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सारांश-

मिथक (myth) प्राचीन कथाओं पर आधारित होता है, जिसका उद्देश्य हमें नैतिक मूल्यों की शिक्षा देना होता है । यह वह कहानी होती है जिनमें देवी - देवता नायक - नायिकाओं के आधार पर प्राकृतिक घटनाओं का वर्णन होता है । इन कथाओं का मूल उद्देश्य बस हमारा मनोरंजन करना नहीं; तो समाज को नैतिकता, संस्कार, जीवन मूल्य का आदर्श सीखाने का होता है । महाभारत जैसी भारतीय पौराणिक कथाएँ जैसे रामायण, महाभारत आदि पुराण कथाओं में राधा, सीता, उर्मिला, द्रौपदी जैसे चरित्र इतिहास के नए पन्ने खोलती है । प्राचीन मिथकों में नारी को शक्ति के रूप में देखा जाता है । जो अन्य के विरुद्ध संघर्ष का उदाहरण प्रस्तुत करती है । मिथकों के नारी पात्र त्याग और सहनशीलता की साक्षात मूर्ति होते थे, जो आज की पीढ़ी को भी प्रेरना देते है । पुरानों के मिथकों की नारी संघर्ष और पीड़ा की मूर्ति है । वो हमारे संस्कृति के संस्कार, कर्तव्य, मूल्य के आदर्श, संस्कृति के आदर्श आदि मूल्यों के उदाहरण हमारे सामने प्रस्तुत करती हैं । माँ सीता का धैर्य, संयम, निष्ठा जैसा गुण आज भी आदर्शवत और मार्गदर्शक साबित होता है । द्रौपदी का साहसी आत्मनिर्भर, निडर चरित्र आज की स्थिति में समाज को निडरता का मार्ग दिखाता है । यह नारियाँ समाज की मर्यादा और संस्कृति की रक्षक है । इस शोधालेख का उद्देश्य यही है कि पौराणिक पात्रों में चित्रित किए गए नारी पात्र आज भी कैसे मार्गदर्शक है , आदर्शवादी है इसका अध्ययन करना ।

बीज शब्द - मिथक , नारी साहित्य, रामायण, महाभारत, पौराणिक, संस्कृती का आदर्श

प्रस्तावना –

मिथक आधुनिक मानव के लिए दिशादर्शक होते है । आदिम मानव के लिए यह कथाएँ धार्मिक महत्व की थी । जो देवी देवताओं के स्वभाव ,विश्व की उत्पत्ति ,मानव उत्पत्ति आदि गंभीर तत्वों पर प्रकाश डालता है । विश्व का कोई भी साहित्य अपने देश की मिथकीय परम्पराओं से असम्पृक्त नहीं है । राम, कृष्ण,शिव आदि की कथा का ग्रहण इसी प्रकार का उदाहरण है । वाल्मीकि का रामायण का तुलसीकृत रामचरितमानस में न केवल प्रयोग किया है बल्कि नवीन भावों से विभूषित किया है । मिथकों की परंपरा में बस पुरुष पात्रों की महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका नहीं रही है बल्कि स्त्री पात्रों की भूमिका भी विशेष उल्लेखनीय है, मार्गदर्शक है । पौराणिक नारियाँ समाज को शिक्षा देती है कि स्त्री केवल पारंपरिक भूमिका निभाने वाले नहीं बल्कि निर्णायक सशक्त और नैतिक शिक्षा देनेवाली भी हो सकती है । और यह शिक्षा आज के जमाने में भी अत्यंत सटीक साबित होती है । पौराणिक मिथकों में महिला पात्रों के कई प्रकार है वह नैतिक आदर्श, शक्ति, धैर्य, त्याग और भक्ति का प्रतीक है । आधुनिक समय में भी यह पात्र स्त्रियों के सशक्तिकरण, नैतिकता और सामाजिक नेतृत्व के आदर्श बनकर हमारे सामने खड़े होते हैं । पौराणिक कहानियों की नारियाँ बस कहानियों के मुख्य पात्र की भूमिका नहीं निभाती तो वह समाज की स्थिति, उस पर आधारित स्त्री का वर्तन, उसका चरित्र, उसके संस्कार, धैर्य मूल्य की प्रेरणा बनती है । सहनशीलता, प्रेम, त्याग स्त्री स्वभाव के प्रमुख गुण होते हैं, फिर भी परिस्थिति अनुसार योग्य निर्णय क्षमता रखना यह भी उसका एक विशेष गुणधर्म है । उसका शक्तिशाली रूप आज के नारी को भी एक दिशा देने का कार्य करता है ।

उद्देश्य-

1) समाज पर होने वाला मिथकों का प्रभाव समझना ।
2) आधुनिक समाज और संस्कृती में इन पौराणिक मिथकों की भूमिका समझाना ।

3) परंपराओं के पीछे छुपी सामाजिक मूल्यों की शिक्षा स्पष्ट करना ।
4) पौराणिक पात्रों के आधार पर आधुनिक नारी को योग्य दिशा देना ।
5) स्त्री में स्वयंप्रेरणा, आत्मशक्ति की प्रेरणा जगाना ।

विषय विवेचन –

हिंदी में प्रचलित शब्द 'मिथक' अंग्रेजी के 'मिथ'(Myth) का पर्याय है ।अरस्तू के 'काव्यशास्त्र' ' ग्रंथ में 'मिथक' शब्द का अर्थ है – कथानक ,कथाबंध, और गल्पकथा । प्राचीन काल में कही गई कथाएँ मात्र कथाएँ नहीं हैं बल्कि वह 'जीवित वास्तविकता' के रूप में थी । मिथक की सर्वप्रथम उल्लेखनीय व्याख्या प्रसिद्ध मनोविश्लेषणशास्त्री 'सिंगमंड फ्राइड़' ने की है । उन्होने स्वीकार किया है की मिथक हमे नया रास्ता बतलाता है । मिथक या पौराणिक कथाएँ मानव सभ्यता से प्राचीन काल से जुड़ी है । मिथक केवल हमारे मनोरंजन के लिए नहीं होते; ये समाज की संस्कृति, जीवन के नैतिक मूल्य, सामाजिक विचार लोगों की जीवन शैली पर अपना गहरा प्रभाव छोड़ते हैं । भारतीय पुराण कथाओं में रामायण, महाभारत और देवताओं की कथाओं से नैतिकता, कर्तव्य और संस्कारों का संदेश मिलता है । हमारे समाज में देवी – देवताओं के लोगों के मन में एक विशेष आदर्श होता है । समाज में नियम बनाने के लिए कुछ अच्छे मूल्यों को प्रस्थापित करने के लिए , यह मिथक प्रेरणास्रोत साबित होते हैं । सामाजिक दृष्टि से देखा जाए तो मिथकों में स्त्री पात्रों के माध्यम से समाज को यह संदेश दिया गया है कि- स्त्री परिवार और समाज की नैतिक रीढ़ है । उसमें सहनशीलता के साथ-साथ न्याय और विवेक की शक्ति भी है । उसका योगदान केवल घरेलू नहीं बल्कि सांस्कृतिक और वैचारिक भी है ।

भारतीय मिथकों और पुराणों में महिला पात्रों के कई प्रकार है । वह नैतिक आदर्श, शक्ति, धैर्य, त्याग और भक्ति का प्रतीक है । प्रत्येक संस्कृति में मूल्य और समाज की संरचना अलग-अलग होती है । धर्म, कर्तव्य, सत्य यह भारतीय समाज के मुख्य आधार है । और भारतीय लोगों में यह पौराणिक मिथक समाज को शिक्षा देने वाले नैतिक संदेश देने वाले होते है । यह मिथक हमारे संस्कृति की रक्षा की धरोहर आगे बढ़ाने के लिए प्रेरणा देने का कार्य करते हैं । आधुनिक संदर्भ में इन पौराणिक नारियों का अध्ययन और भी प्रासंगिक हो जाता है । आज जब स्त्री सशक्तिकरण और अधिकार की चर्चा होती है तब द्रौपदी का आत्म सम्मान, शकुंतला की आत्मनिर्भरता और मंदोदरी की बुद्धिमत्ता हमें यह समझाती है कि भारतीय परंपरा में स्त्री चेतना प्रारंभ से ही विद्यमान रही है ।अतः यह कहा जा सकता है कि, मिथकों में वर्णित पौराणिक नारियाँ केवल अतीत का पात्र नहीं है बल्कि वह आज भी समाज को नैतिक दिशा, संस्कृती की पहचान में स्त्री की बहुआयामी भूमिका समझाने में सक्षम है । भारतीय मिथकों में नारी ना तो कमजोर है और ना हीं सीमित बल्कि यह संस्कृति मूल्य और चेतना की सशक्त वाहक है ।

- **सीता** -

हमारे भारतीय संस्कृति के मिथकों को देखा जाए तो सबसे पहले एक आदर्श के रूप में माँ 'सीता' को देखा जाता है । रामायण के अंतर्गत उनका चरित्र एक आदर्श है । जिसका मुख्य गुण पातिव्रत्य, निष्ठा, धैर्य संयम है । सीता के चरित्र से समाज को पति के प्रति समर्पित होना सत्य और धर्म का पालन करने का संदेश मिलता है । सीता का चरित्र एक नैतिक और धार्मिक आदर्श है । रावण के यहाँ बंदी होने पर भी संकट से ना घबराकर धैर्य बनाकर रखना उनका सबसे बड़ा गुण है । जिससे समाज को संदेश मिलता है कि स्त्री को कर्तव्यनिष्ठ और संयमित होना चाहिए ।

- **द्रौपदी**-

महाभारत की द्रौपदी का मुख्य गुण उसका साहस, आत्मनिर्भर, निर्णयक्षम और निडर चरित्र है । पांडवों की पत्नी के रूप में द्रौपदी कई संकटों का सामना करती है । उसे एक भिक्षा समझकर आपस में पत्नी के रूप में बाँटा जाता है । पतियों द्वारा जुए में हार जाने पर उसका चीर हरण किया जाता है । द्रौपदी एक सबसे शक्तिशाली और न्याय के लिए लड़ने वाली स्त्री है । समाज में अपने अधिकारों के लिए खड़ा होने की क्षमता द्रौपदी के अंदर है । उनका सक्षम चरित्र आज के नारियों को भी संदेश देता है , उस समय द्रौपदी को एक राजकुमारी होते हुए भी चीरहरण ,जुए जैसे परिणामों को भुगतना पड़ा । तो

आज के नारी की स्थिति क्या होगी इसका आभास आसानी से होता है । इसका मतलब काल कौन - सा भी हो कल हो या आज चीरहरण, बलात्कार, जुआ शराब जैसी भीषण समस्याओं से नारी तब भी जूझ रही थी और आज भी । लेकिन इन समस्याओं से हार ना मान कर अपने परिवार के लिए फिर से उठकर खड़ी होना अपने परिवार की हिम्मत और आधार बनने का कार्य वह तब भी करती थी और आज भी ।

- **उर्मिला-**

उर्मिला यह पत्र रामायण में थोड़ा सा वंचित सा दिखाई देता है । लेकिन उसकी पीड़ा उसका दर्द और अगणित है । रामायण में उर्मिला लक्ष्मण की पत्नी की भूमिका में दिखाई देती है । राम जी वनवास जाने के समय जब लक्ष्मण भी वनवास चले गए तब अपनी इच्छाओं का त्याग करके उन्होने अपना कर्तव्य निभाया । उनका यह त्याग उस कथा को आगे बढ़ाता है , और समाज में स्थिरता का संदेश देता है । यह कथा पढ़कर या सुनकर सब लोग राम के सत्यप्रियता, सीता का पतिव्रता, लक्ष्मण के त्याग के उदाहरण देते हैं, उन्हें अपना आदर्श मानते हैं । लेकिन कोई उर्मिला के चरित्र के बारे में नहीं सोचता । पति के बगैर उर्मिला ने अपना जीवन कैसे व्यतीत किया होगा, उसने वनवास के इस दीर्घ समय तक कितना दर्द, दुख सहन किया होगा । उसका अकेलापन कैसा होगा । उसका अपने परिवार के प्रति समर्पण, पति के प्रेम में अपने सपनों का किया हुआ त्याग भी एक आदर्श स्थापित करता है । उसका त्याग, सहनशीलता, समर्पण, संयम आज के समाज को त्याग और संयम की नई सीख देता है ।

- **शकुंतला** –

कालिदास द्वारा लिखित कथा की नायिका और राजा दुष्यंत की प्रेयसी के रूप में शकुंतला का चरित्र उभरता है । अत्यंत सुंदर और लाघवी शकुंतला की सुंदरता देखकर राजा दुष्यंत उसपर मोहित होता है । दोनों में बेपनाह प्रेम हो जाता है । लेकिन एक ऋषि के श्राप की वजह से राजा दुष्यंत अपने प्यार शकुंतला को भूल जाता है । लेकिन बिना किसी अपराध उसकी शिक्षा शकुंतला को भुगतनी पड़ती है । दुष्यंत के भूल जाने के पश्चात भी शकुंतला हार नहीं मानती । आत्मसम्मान, प्रेमपूर्ण, नैतिकता और आत्मनिर्भरता उसके स्वभाव के मुख्य गुण है । शकुंतला के चरित्र से आज के समाज को स्वतंत्र विचारों और अपने आत्मसम्मान का सम्मान करने की सीख मिलती है ।

- **राधा** –

राधा एक भावनात्मक और आध्यात्मिक स्त्री का आधार स्वरूप है । उनका चरित्र भक्ति, प्रेम और समर्पण का महत्व सिखाता है । यह पात्र मुख्य रूप से नायिका, यानी कृष्ण के प्रति प्रेम, भक्ति का प्रतीक है । राधा कृष्ण की कहानी अनंत काल से प्रेम के सौंदर्य के अलग-अलग रूप को समझाती है । प्रेम का मतलब पाना नहीं होता तो प्रेम समर्पण का एक रूप है । प्रेम त्याग है किसी भी स्वार्थ के बिना भक्ति भाव से प्रेम करना अपने साथी को परमेश्वर की तरह पुझना, समय आने पर अपने प्रेम के लिए अपनी भावनाओं को त्याग देना, कर्तव्य के प्रति अपना समर्पण देना यही सत्य प्रेम है । राधा का यह चरित्र आधुनिक युग में भी प्रेम समर्पण और भक्ति के आदर्श रूप को समझता है ।

- **मंदोदरी** –

रामायण में जिस पात्र को खलनायक के रूप में दिखाया गया है; वह है रावण ।और रावण की पत्नी होकर भी हिंसक या दुष्ट रूप में ना दिखाई देने वाला चरित्र मंदोदरी । मंदोदरी रावण की पत्नी है और रामायण की एक पतिव्रता , ज्ञानी स्त्री पात्र है । पति के घर गैरवर्तन में उसे उचित दिशा दिखलाने की कोशिश करने वाली, अनिष्ट वर्तन के बावजूद खुद पर संयम रखने वाली बुद्धिमान, समझदार, नैतिक दृष्टि रखने वाली स्त्री के रूप में मंदोदरी का चरित्र दिखाया गया है । मंदोदरी नैतिकता और विवेक का प्रतीक है । वह सामाजिक और धार्मिक निर्णय में मार्गदर्शन करती है । मंदोदरी का यह चरित्र आधुनिक काल की स्त्री को समझदारी बुद्धिमत्ता और नैतिकता का संदेश देता है ।

पौराणिक मिथकों में चित्रित नारियों की यह अलग-अलग चरित्र समाज में नए-नए आदर्श प्रस्तापित करते हैं । बस यही नहीं शिव की शक्ति माँ पार्वती, देवी गंगा, देवी लक्ष्मी, गांधारी, कुंती, मोहिनी जैसे कई पात्र है जो हमारे समाज में अलग महत्व रखते है । आदर्श स्त्री के रूप में सीता, राधा धार्मिक और नैतिक आदर्श प्रस्तावित करती है । शक्तिशाली और

निर्णायक स्त्रियों के रूप में द्रौपदी, शकुंतला समाज में अपने सशक्त भूमिका कैसे निभानी है यह सिखलाती है । सहनशील और त्यागी स्त्रियों में उर्मिला, मंदोदरी समाज और परिवार के संतुलन में योगदान देती है । अतः पुरानों के यह नारी पात्र बस आधुनिक युग के काल्पनिक न होकर प्रेरणादायक साबित होते है ।

निष्कर्ष –

पौराणिक मिथकों में चित्रित नारी केवल कहानियों का पात्र नहीं है । वह समाज के मूल्य, संस्कार और उसमें स्त्री की भूमिका सिखाती है । आधुनिक समाज में भी यह पात्र स्त्रियों के सशक्तिकरण, नैतिकता और नेतृत्व के आदर्श है । मिथक और पौराणिक साहित्य भारतीय संस्कृति की आत्मा है । इनमें वर्णित कथाएँ केवल कल्पना या धार्मिक आस्था तक सीमित नहीं है; बल्कि वे समाज की सोच, नैतिकता स्त्री - पुरुष संबंध, पारिवारिक व्यवस्था, और सांस्कृतिक मूल्यों को दिशा देती है। पौराणिक नारियाँ भारतीय मिथकीय परंपरा में अत्यंत सशक्त, बहूआयामी और अर्थपूर्ण भूमिका निभाती है । सीता, द्रौपदी,उर्मिला, शकुंतला, राधा और मंदोदरी जैसे स्त्री पात्र केवल सहायक या गौण चरित्र नहीं है; बल्कि वह कथा की नैतिक धुरी है। इनके निर्णय, सहनशीलता, संघर्ष और विचार ही कथाओं को गति और गहराई प्रदान करते हैं । इस अध्ययन से यह भी स्पष्ट होता है कि पौराणिक स्त्री पात्रों को एक ही दृष्टिकोण से नहीं देखा जा सकता । महत्वपूर्ण बात यह भी है कि यह पात्र केवल आदर्श स्त्री की परंपरागत छवि तक सीमित नहीं है, बल्कि वह संघर्षशील, गहन सोच वाली और निर्णय लेने वाली स्त्रियाँ है । द्रौपदी का अन्याय के विरुद्ध प्रश्न उठाना, शकुंतला का आत्मसम्मान बनाए रखना और मंदोदरी का रावण को नैतिकता का मार्ग दिखाने का प्रयास यह सभी उदाहरण यह सिद्ध करते है कि, पौराणिक नारी बस एक कहानी मात्र नहीं है,बस काल्पनिक नहीं है , निष्क्रिय नहीं है बल्कि चेतन और सशक्त है जो आज के जमाने में भी लोगों को नैतिकता का आदर्श का पाठ पढ़ाती है, सुयोग्य वर्तन के लिए दिशा देती है ।

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भगवान सिंह के 'अपने-अपने राम' उपन्यास में मिथक एवं सत्य

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शोध-सार :

*भगवान सिंह का उपन्यास **'अपने-अपने राम'** समकालीन हिंदी साहित्य की एक युगांतकारी कृति है। यह उपन्यास पौराणिक चरित्रों को अलौकिक धरातल से उतारकर मानवीय और तार्किक धरातल पर स्थापित करता है। प्रस्तुत शोध आलेख भगवान सिंह के चर्चित उपन्यास 'अपने-अपने राम' में मिथक और ऐतिहासिक सत्य के अंतर्संबंधों का विश्लेषण करता है। भगवान सिंह का उपन्यास 'अपने-अपने राम' परम्परागत रामकथा के प्रचलित मिथकों को इतिहास-बोध, वर्ग-चेतना और आधुनिक तर्कबुद्धि की कसौटी पर पुनः जाँचने का महत्त्वपूर्ण प्रयास है। लेखक रामायण की देवी-देवता केन्द्रित, अलौकिक तथा एकांगी प्रस्तुतियों के स्थान पर सामाजिक-राजनीतिक संघर्षों, वर्चस्व संरचनाओं और दमन-प्रतिरोध की प्रक्रियाओं को उभारते हैं। प्रस्तुत शोध आलेख का उद्देश्य यह देखना है कि उपन्यास में 'मिथक' और 'सत्य' किन स्तरों पर टकराते हैं, किस प्रकार परम्परा के भीतर से ही प्रश्न उठते हैं और सत्य के नए सशक्त संस्करण सामने आते हैं।*

विशेषतः राम, भरत, वशिष्ठ, कैकेयी, रावण, शंबूक तथा अहिल्या जैसे पात्रों के माध्यम से जाति-आधारित वर्चस्व, ब्राह्मणवाद, स्त्री-विरोध, तथा शासक-पुरोहित गठजोड़ पर तीखा प्रहार किया गया है; वहीं राम-सीता के सम्बन्ध, वनवासी समुदायों, निष्ठावान पात्रों (हनुमान, निषादराज) और वैकल्पिक न्याय-दृष्टि के रचनात्मक संकेत भी निरूपित होते हैं।

निष्कर्ष यह है कि भगवान सिंह का उपन्यास मिथक-विघटन के माध्यम से एक बहुस्तरीय, बहु-दृष्टि 'राम' रचता है, जो आधुनिक लोकतांत्रिक मूल्यों और सामाजिक न्याय की आकांक्षाओं के अधिक निकट है। भगवान सिंह के "अपने-अपने राम" में रामकथा को मिथक से सत्य की ओर ले जाया गया है।

बीज शब्द : *मिथक, सत्य, रामकथा, ब्राह्मणवाद, इतिहास-बोध, सामाजिक न्याय, भगवान सिंह, अपने-अपने राम*

उद्देश्य :

- भगवान सिंह के 'अपने-अपने राम' में मिथक और सत्य के द्वन्द्व को स्पष्ट करना।
- रामकथा से जुड़े प्रमुख मिथकीय निर्माणों (देवत्व, आदर्श-वाद, ब्राह्मण-केन्द्रिकता) की आलोचनात्मक जाँच करना।
- पात्र-निर्माण के स्तर पर मिथक-विघटन की रणनीतियों को चिन्हित करना (राम, भरत, वशिष्ठ, कैकेयी, रावण, शंबूक, अहिल्या आदि)।
- उपन्यास में अन्तर्निहित 'सत्य' को इतिहास, समाजशास्त्र और दलित-बहुजन दृष्टि से समझना।
- यह देखना कि यह पाठक के 'धार्मिक' राम और 'ऐतिहासिक-सामाजिक' राम के बीच कैसी वैचारिक बेचैनी और पुनर्विचार की प्रक्रिया पैदा करता है।

प्रस्तावना :

रामकथा भारतीय सांस्कृतिक मानस की केन्द्रीय धुरी रही है; वाल्मीकि रामायण से लेकर तुलसीदास के 'रामचरितमानस' और दक्षिण-पूर्व एशिया तक फैली विविध रामायण परम्पराएँ इस मिथक की व्यापकता को प्रमाणित करती हैं। लोक में प्रतिष्ठित राम एक साथ देव, आदर्श पुत्र, आदर्श पति, आदर्श राजा और मर्यादा पुरुषोत्तम हैं; परिणामतः उनकी आलोचना प्रायः 'आस्था पर चोट' के रूप में पढ़ी जाती रही है। परन्तु आधुनिक काल में शरतचन्द्र, प्रेमचन्द, मन्थन, मैनार्ड, नरायण, नरेंद्र कोहली, रामकुमार मुखोपाध्याय, Amish Tripathi आदि ने रामकथा की पुनर्पाठ परम्परा को समृद्ध किया, और मिथकीय आवरण के पीछे छिपे सामाजिक-राजनीतिक यथार्थ को सामने लाने का प्रयत्न किया।

इसी क्रम में भगवान सिंह का उपन्यास 'अपने-अपने राम' रामकथा के भीतर व्याप्त सत्ता-सौन्दर्य, जाति-वर्चस्व, स्त्री-दमन और राजपुरोहितीय गठजोड़ को प्रखर रूप से उजागर करता है। भगवान सिंह राम, भरत, दशरथ, वशिष्ठ और रावण जैसे पात्रों को नए दृष्टिकोण से प्रस्तुत करते हैं। राम यहाँ ब्राह्मणवादी वर्चस्व के विरोधी, शोषित-वंचित वर्ग के समर्थक तथा विवेकशील शासक हैं। भरत का चरित्र आदर्श भ्रातृ-प्रेम से हटकर दुर्बल मानसिकता और सत्ता-प्रभाव से ग्रस्त रूप में उभरता है। रावण का चरित्र भी पूर्णतः दानवी न होकर सामाजिक-आर्थिक विकृतियों से जुड़ा हुआ दिखता है।

डॉ. सुषमा चौगले (मांडेकर) के शब्दों में, यह उपन्यास "रामकथा का एकांगी रूप नहीं, बल्कि बहुआयामी दृष्टिकोणों का संघर्षशील पाठ है।" [1] जिसमें "सत्य और असत्य का द्वन्द्व" कथा के हर मोड़ पर दिखायी देता है।

चूँकि उपयोगकर्ता-समाज में राम के प्रति गहरी धार्मिक आस्था और भावनात्मक लगाव है, 'अपने-अपने राम' जैसे उपन्यास स्वभावतः विवादास्पद भी बनते हैं; फिर भी वे हमें अपने मिथकों की जड़ों, उनकी प्रयोजनीयता और उनके भीतर निहित सत्ता-सम्बन्धों पर विचार करने के लिए बाध्य करते हैं।

1. मिथक और सत्य : अवधारणा और परिप्रेक्ष्य

'मिथक' केवल असत्य कथा नहीं, बल्कि किसी समाज की सामूहिक प्रतीक-रचना, मूल्य-संरचना और शक्ति-व्यवस्था का सांस्कृतिक रूप है। राम मिथक का केंद्रीय कार्य भी भारतीय समाज में आज्ञाकारिता, पितृसत्ता, जाति-व्यवस्था, ब्राह्मण वर्चस्व और स्त्री-शील की विशिष्ट संकल्पनाओं को वैध ठहराना रहा है। 'सत्य' यहाँ पर केवल 'ऐतिहासिक तथ्य' नहीं, बल्कि वह विवेकपूर्ण, तर्कसंगत व्याख्या है जो इन मिथकीय संरचनाओं के सामाजिक - राजनीतिक अर्थ को उघाड़ती है।

भगवान सिंह का उपन्यास 'अपने-अपने राम' इसी अर्थ में मिथक-विघटन (demythologization) का उपक्रम है; वह न तो राम का पूर्णतः नकार करता है, न उन्हें जड़ देवत्व के सिंहासन पर बैठाकर आलोचनारहित बनाता है; बल्कि व्यक्ति-राम, राजा-राम और लोकनायक-राम के भीतर निहित विरोधाभासों को सामने लाता है। इस प्रक्रिया में वे कई 'अप्रिय' प्रश्न उठाते हैं :

क्या रामकाल में भी ब्राह्मणवाद उसी तरह क्रूर और जातिवादी था, जैसा बाद के कालों में दिखता है?

क्या वशिष्ठ जैसे पुरोहितों के निर्णय वास्तव में 'धर्म' प्रेरित थे, या वर्ग-हित प्रेरित?

भरत, कैकेयी, रावण, शंबूक, अहिल्या आदि को पुरानी कथाओं में जिस तरह आदर्शीकृत/दुष्प्रचारित किया गया, उसके पीछे किसका हित निहित था?

क्या 'रामराज्य' वास्तव में सर्वसमावेशी, न्यायपूर्ण और समानतावादी था, या उसमें भी गहरे सामाजिक-आर्थिक असमानताएँ थीं?

यह प्रश्न-समुच्चय ही उपन्यास का मिथक-विरोधी, सत्य-अन्वेषी आधार बनता है।

2. राम : देवत्व-मिथक से लोक-हितकारी, विरोधाभासी मनुष्य

तुलसीदास का राम सर्वाधिक लोकप्रिय मिथकीय रूप है: 'भये प्रकट कृपाल..., लोचन अवरामा तनु घनश्यामा...'[2] आदि वर्णनों में वे स्पष्ट रूप से विष्णु-अवतार, सर्वशक्तिमान देवता हैं। राम के लिए 'त्रैलोक्य' हिलाना, पर्वत उठाना, चमत्कार करना सहज है; उनके किसी निर्णय को प्रश्नांकित करना मानो धर्म-विरुद्ध कार्य है। भगवान सिंह इस देवत्व-आभा को हटाकर राम को एक सजग, विचारशील, परन्तु सीमाओं-युक्त मनुष्य और लोकनायक के रूप में रचते हैं। डॉ. चौगले लिखती हैं कि उपन्यास के राम कहते है- "सभी राक्षस ब्राम्हण ही क्यों होते हैं?" [3] अर्थात उपन्यास का राम "ब्राह्मणवाद का प्रखर विरोधी और दलित-उपेक्षितों के प्रति दयालु शासक है" [4], जो

[1] 1. चौगले सुषमा. 'अपने-अपने राम : सत्य और असत्य का द्वन्द्व', सर्वप्रिय प्रकाशन, दिल्ली – रायपुर, प्रथम संस्करण 2025, पृ. 7.

[2] 2. तुलसीदास, गोस्वामी. रामचरितमानस. गोरखपुर: गीता प्रेस, पुनर्मुद्रण, बालकाण्ड, विशेषतः "भये प्रकट कृपाल...", "लोचन अवरामा तनु घनश्यामा...", तथा "रघुकुल रीति सदा चलि आई..." प्रसंग।

[3] 3. चौगले सुषमा. 'अपने-अपने राम : सत्य और असत्य का द्वन्द्व', सर्वप्रिय प्रकाशन, दिल्ली – रायपुर, प्रथम संस्करण 2025, पृ. 25

[4] 4. चौगले सुषमा. 'अपने-अपने राम : सत्य और असत्य का द्वन्द्व', सर्वप्रिय प्रकाशन, दिल्ली – रायपुर, प्रथम संस्करण 2025, पृ. 5

अकाल-काल में ब्राह्मण-प्रेरित अश्वमेध-यज्ञ के स्थान पर तालाब-कुएँ खुदवाने, वृक्षारोपण, सिंचाई जैसे कल्याणकारी कार्यों पर बल देता है।

राम का यह रूप 'मिथक' की दो परतों पर प्रहार करता है: देवत्व-मिथक — जहाँ राम चमत्कारी, सर्वज्ञ, सर्वशक्तिमान हैं; यहाँ वे तर्कशील, नीति-पक्षधर, परन्तु राजनीतिक दबावों से भी जूझने वाले राजा के रूप में सामने आते हैं।

अदोष आदर्श-मिथक — पारम्परिक कथा में राम का हर निर्णय 'धर्म' है; उपन्यास में राम से भी भूलें, कमजोरियाँ और दबाव-जनित निर्णय होते दिखते हैं; जैसे— सीता-वनवास के प्रसंग पर वे अपने ही मन में अपराध-बोध से ग्रस्त हैं, पर सार्वजनिक रूप से वे 'राज-धर्म' और 'लोक-अपवाद' के दबाव में इस निर्णय को स्वीकारते हैं।

राम का यह मानवीकरण स्वयं एक नया 'सत्य' उद्घाटित करता है—कि आदर्श व्यक्ति भी ऐतिहासिक-सामाजिक संदर्भों से मुक्त नहीं होता; उसकी नैतिकता भी सत्ता-संरचनाओं के भीतर संघर्षशील रहती है।

3. ब्राह्मणवाद, वशिष्ठ और 'धर्म' का मिथकीय आवरण :

पारम्परिक रामकथा में वशिष्ठ राजगुरु, वेदविता, धर्माचार्य और सर्वमान्य मार्गदर्शक हैं; उनका कथन मानो शास्त्र है। 'अपने-अपने राम' में यही पात्र सामन्ती-ब्राह्मण गठजोड़ का प्रतीक बन जाता है। विजय बहादुर सिंह 'उपन्यास : समय और संवेदना' में महाकाव्य, मिथक और उपन्यास : अपने अपने राम' के अंतर्गत लिखते है- "वशिष्ठ आदि जन्मना ब्राह्मणवादी-ब्राह्मण ने असली और वरेण्य मान रखा है और कदम-कदम पर उसकी रक्षा और अंधपालन की वकालत करते हैं।" [5] उपन्यास-समालोचना के अनुसार वशिष्ठ की प्राथमिक चिंता 'धर्म' नहीं, बल्कि ब्राह्मण-हित, यज्ञ-आर्थिकता और पुरोहित-वर्चस्व की रक्षा है।

वह अश्वमेध-यज्ञ के पक्ष में तर्क देते हुए राजा को भय दिखाता है कि रावण-वध से 'ब्राह्मण-हत्या-दोष' लगा है; उसका प्रायश्चित केवल महायज्ञ से ही सम्भव है। राम यज्ञ-में व्यर्थ अनाज-दलहन-घृत-समिधा की आहुति के स्थान पर जल-स्रोतों की मरम्मत, अकाल-निवारण और जनकल्याणकारी कार्यों पर धन खर्च करने का प्रस्ताव रखते हैं; वशिष्ठ इसे 'वेद-विरुद्ध' और 'धर्म-विरुद्ध' कहकर स्वीकारने से इंकार करता है।

शंबूक प्रसंग में भी वह शूद्र-विरोधी, वर्ण-आधारित दंड-नीति का मुखर पक्षधर दिखाया गया है, जबकि राम की सहज नैतिक संवेदना इस तरह के दमन को स्वीकार नहीं करती।

इस प्रकार 'धर्म' का जो मिथक ब्राह्मण-वर्ग ने रचा है, उसके भीतर सत्ता, लालच और जातिगत घृणा की सच्चाई उद्घाटित होती है।

4. भरत, कैकेयी और 'आदर्श भातृ-भाव' का पुनर्पाठ

लोकमंगल-मुखी तुलसी-कथा में भरत त्याग, तपस्या और भ्रातृ-भक्ति के प्रतीक हैं; वे राम की खड़ाँउ सिंहासन पर रखकर स्वयं तपस्वी-तिरस्कृत जीवन बिताते हैं। 'अपने-अपने राम' इस आदर्शीकृत मिथक के बरक्स भरत को नशाखोर, कमजोर इच्छाशक्ति वाले, दरबारी षड्यंत्रों के मोहरे के रूप में चित्रित करता है, जिसे बचपन से ही 'मेरेय' (मदिरा) की लत और ब्राह्मण-कुल के दुष्प्रभाव ने दूषित कर दिया है।

'अपने-अपने राम' में एक जगह भगवान सिंह लिखते हैं — "कैकेयी की मनोकामना पूरी हो गई थी। उसने न केवल राम को निर्वासित कर दिया था अपितु उन्हें चीर पहनने को बाध्य करके इतना अपमानित भी कर दिया था कि वह वनवास की अवधि के बाद, यदि किसी तरह जीवित बच भी जाए तो पुनः अयोध्यावासियों को मुंह दिखाने का साहस ना जुटा पाए। चीर उठाने को बाध्य करके उसके नैतिक रूप में तो मुझे भी सबके सामने अर्धनग्न कर ही दिया था और अब वशिष्ठ की भत्सर्ना से विचलित हुए बिना वह चुपचाप मुस्कुरा रही थी।" [6] इसी प्रकार कैकेयी का रूप भी यहाँ केवल 'मंथरा-प्रेरित मदान्ध स्त्री' का नहीं, बल्कि अपनी महत्तम आकांक्षाओं, पितृ-राजनीति और वशिष्ठ के संकेतों के बीच उलझी एक महत्त्वाकांक्षी, परन्तु अन्ततः त्रासद नारी का है, जो अपने पुत्र-केन्द्रित दृष्टिकोण में सम्पूर्ण राजव्यवस्था को डांवाडोल कर देती है। यह पुनर्पाठ दो प्रकार के मिथकों को चुनौती देता है—

भरत-आदर्श मिथक : जहाँ भरत पूर्ण निस्वार्थ, निर्लोभ, तपस्वी हैं; उपन्यास उन्हें सामन्ती-राजनीति के भीतर पैदा हुई 'मंदी बुद्धि' और 'दुरुपयोग' की मिसाल बना देता है।

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[5] 5. सिंह विजय बहादुर, 'उपन्यास : समय और संवेदना', महाकाव्य, मिथक और उपन्यास : अपने अपने राम', वाणी प्रकाशन, नयी दिल्ली, प्रथम संस्करण : 2007, पृ. 137

[6] 6. सिंह भगवान, 'अपने-अपने राम', सस्ता साहित्य मण्डल प्रकाशन, नई दिल्ली, 2016, पृ. 238, 239

कैकेयी-राक्षसी स्त्री मिथक : पारम्परिक दृष्टि में वह केवल 'कुलटा, कपटी सौत' हैं; यहाँ वह पितृसत्तात्मक व्यापार-राजनीति की शिकार भी हैं, जिसने उन्हें वृद्ध राजा की काम-वासना की पूर्ति का साधन बना दिया।

डॉ. चौगले सही संकेत करती हैं कि इस पुनर्पाठ से पाठक के लिए परम्परागत 'सफेद-काले' विभाजन टूटते हैं और पात्र अधिक जटिल, ऐतिहासिक और मानवीय बन उठते हैं।

5. रावण, शंबूक, अहिल्या : दानवी मिथकों के पीछे का यथार्थ

रावण का पारम्परिक चित्रण 'दस-शीर्ष, घोर असुर, देव-द्वेषी, कामुक राक्षस' के रूप में है; उसके सभी गुण 'दैत्यत्व' की पुष्टि करने के लिए प्रयुक्त होते हैं, ताकि राम का 'दैवीय नायकत्व' और अधिक दीप्त दिखे। 'अपने-अपने राम' रावण को असाधारण योद्धा, समृद्ध समुद्री व्यापार-साम्राज्य के स्वामी, गुलाम-व्यापारी, परन्तु राजनैतिक क्रूरता और लोभ से ग्रस्त शासक के रूप में प्रस्तुत करता है।

वह वनवासी, आदिवासी, ग़रीब समुदायों को पकड़कर दास बनाता, द्वीपीय राज्यों और सामन्तों को बेचता है; सीता-अपहरण भी धन-लोभ और कैकेयी-भरत से सौदेबाज़ी की योजना से जुड़ा दिखाया जाता है, न कि केवल बहन-अपमान या काम-वासना से।

फिर भी वह सीता के प्रति शारीरिक आक्रमण से बचता है; उसे 'राज-वधू' मानकर, दूरी बनाये रखता है; यह द्वन्द्व-युक्त चित्रण पाठक को सोचने पर विवश करता है कि 'राक्षसी' कहे गये चरित्रों के भीतर भी जटिल मानवीय आयाम होते हैं।

इसी तरह शंबूक और अहिल्या के प्रसंगों में उपन्यास, ब्राह्मणवादी मिथकों के विरुद्ध एक वैकल्पिक सत्य रखता है— शंबूक : पारम्परिक मिथक में 'शूद्र द्वारा वेदाध्ययन' को कारण बताकर राम से उसका वध कराया जाता है। जेष्ठ आलोचक विजय बहादुर सिंह 'उपन्यास : समय और संवेदना' में महाकाव्य, मिथक और उपन्यास : अपने अपने राम' के अंतर्गत लिखते है — "अपने-अपने राम में धर्मसभा में एक ओर राज पुरोहित वशिष्ठ जैसे अति प्रतिष्ठित और सुविधा संपन्न बुजुर्ग ब्राह्मण हैं तो दूसरी और शंभुक जैसा प्रतिभा - प्रखर अप्रतिष्ठि शुद्ध युवक।" [7] उपन्यास में इसे वशिष्ठ द्वारा फैलायी गई राजनीतिक अफवाह बताया गया है, ताकि दैवी-राज्य की छवि बची रहे और शूद्र-बौद्धिकता को दमन योग्य ठहराया जा सके।

अहिल्या : जो 'पत्थर बनी पापिनी' के रूप में चित्रित होती रही है, यहाँ वह पुरुष-वर्चस्व और बलात् शोषण की शिकार स्त्री के रूप में सामने आती है, जिसे गौतम-ऋषि सहित समाज ने दण्डित किया; राम उसका पुनर्वास कर, स्वयं को पुरुष-समाज के अपराध के लिए जिम्मेदार मानते हुए उसके चरणों में क्षमा माँगते हैं।

यहाँ 'मिथक'—सत्य का द्वन्द्व लिंग-राजनीति और जाति-राजनीति दोनों स्तरों पर उभरता है; 'पापिनी' स्त्री और 'अवर्ण' पुरुष के दानवीकरण के पीछे ब्राह्मणवादी सत्ता-वास्तविकता स्पष्ट होती है।

6. वनवासी समुदाय, निषादराज, हनुमान : हाशिये का सत्य

रामकथा के हाशिये पर रहने वाले वनवासी, निषाद, वानर, गीध इत्यादि समूहों को पारम्परिक पाठों में या तो 'सेवक', 'वानर', 'निम्न जाति' के रूप में देखा गया, या चमत्कारी-भक्ति के आदर्श के रूप में (जैसे हनुमान)। 'अपने-अपने राम' इन समुदायों की पृथक सामाजिक संरचना, राजनीतिक शक्ति और सांस्कृतिक स्वायत्तता पर बल देता है।

निषादराज गुह का गणराज्य न केवल राम-अनुनयी है, बल्कि अपनी सैन्य शक्ति, सामूहिकता और स्वतंत्रता पर गर्व करता है; वह राम को अपना राज्य सौंपने के लिए तैयार है, क्योंकि उसे अपने समाज की शक्ति और अस्मिता पर भरोसा है।

वानर समुदायों को 'बंदर' नहीं, बल्कि विशिष्ट आदिवासी जनजातियों के रूप में निरूपित किया गया है, जिनकी अपनी राजनीति, संघर्ष और परम्पराएँ हैं; सुग्रीव-बाली संघर्ष और हनुमान की भूमिका इस दृष्टि से पुनर्पाठित होती है।

हनुमान केवल भक्त, दास या विनीत सेवक नहीं, बल्कि अत्यन्त कुशल रणनीतिकार, कूटनीतिज्ञ और संगठनकर्ता हैं, जिनके बल पर राम वनवासी और निम्नवर्गीय समुदायों का विशाल मोर्चा खड़ा कर पाते हैं।

इस तरह उपन्यास उन वर्गों की 'सत्य-कथा' लिखता है, जिन्हें मिथक प्रायः पृष्ठभूमि में धकेल देता था।

निष्कर्ष :

[7] 7. सिंह विजय बहादुर, 'उपन्यास : समय और संवेदना', महाकाव्य, मिथक और उपन्यास : अपने अपने राम', वाणी प्रकाशन, नयी दिल्ली, प्रथम संस्करण : 2007, पृ. 140

'अपने-अपने राम' भगवान सिंह की वह रचना है जो रामकथा के चारों ओर बुने गए देवत्व-आच्छादित मिथकों के भीतर छिपे सामाजिक-राजनीतिक सत्य को सामने लाती है। राम को अवतारी देव के स्थान पर ऐतिहासिक मनुष्य और संघर्षशील राजा के रूप में रखकर, वह ब्राह्मणवाद, वर्ण-व्यवस्था, स्त्री-दमन और राज-पुरोहित गठजोड़ के कई असहज प्रश्न पाठक के सामने रखता है।

'अपने-अपने राम' उपन्यास न तो किसी 'एक' अंतिम सत्य का दावा करता है, न किसी 'एक' राम की स्थापना; वह अनेक 'रामों'—भक्तों के राम, ब्राह्मणों के राम, राजाओं के राम, दलित-बहुजन के राम, स्त्रियों के राम—के बीच चल रहे वैचारिक संघर्ष को सामने लाता है। इसी में 'मिथक बनाम सत्य' का वास्तविक द्वन्द्व निहित है: मिथक सत्ता-सम्बन्धों को चुपचाप वैध बनाना चाहता है, जबकि सत्य उन सम्बन्धों पर प्रश्नचिह्न लगाकर न्यायसंगत विकल्पों की खोज करता है।

समाजशास्त्रीय दृष्टि से यह उपन्यास भारतीय परम्परा के भीतर आत्मालोचन की एक ज़रूरी कड़ी है, जो पाठक को न तो अंध-विश्वास में छोड़ता है, न निहिलवाद में; वह राम की छवि को ध्वस्त नहीं करता, बल्कि उसे इतिहास, समाज और मनुष्य की जटिलताओं से जोड़कर और अधिक अर्थपूर्ण बनाता है।

उपन्यास का केंद्रीय भाव यही है कि सत्य एकांगी नहीं होता। लोक-आस्था का सत्य और इतिहास का सत्य अलग-अलग हो सकते हैं। भगवान सिंह यह स्पष्ट करते हैं कि रामकथा का कोई एक अंतिम रूप नहीं है—हर दृष्टि से देखा गया राम अलग है। यही 'अपने-अपने राम' की मूल अवधारणा है।

'अपने-अपने राम' मिथक-विरोधी नहीं, बल्कि मिथक-पुनर्व्याख्याता उपन्यास है। यह कृति रामकथा को आधुनिक संदर्भों में पुनः देखने की प्रेरणा देती है। भगवान सिंह यह सिद्ध करते हैं कि परंपरा तभी जीवंत रहती है, जब उसे प्रश्नों और तर्कों के साथ समझा जाए।

यह उपन्यास पाठक को यह सोचने पर विवश करता है कि क्या हम राम को केवल पूजा की वस्तु मानें या सामाजिक न्याय, विवेक और मानवीयता के प्रतीक के रूप में स्वीकार करें। इसी में इस कृति की वैचारिक और साहित्यिक महत्ता निहित है।

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मिट्टी से उठते सवाल: 'भूमिजा' खंडकाव्य में चित्रित नारी की सामाजिक स्थिति

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शोध सार :

प्रस्तुत शोध आलेख नागार्जुन के भूमिजा खंडकाव्य की नायिका जो भूमि से उपजी है, जो भूमि की पुत्री है उसकी सामाजिक स्थिति और अस्तित्वगत संघर्षों का चित्रण कराता है। अभितक अनेक अख्यानों में सीता को देवत्व का स्वरूप प्रदान किया दिखाई देता है। लेकिन नागार्जुन सीता को इस देवत्व से बाहर निकालकर एक आम संघर्षशील नारी के रूप में प्रस्तुत किया है। जो पितृसत्ताक समाज की खोकली मानसिकता पर करारा सवाल उठाता है। खंडकाव्य में सीता को भूमि से जन्मी माना है परंतु यहाँ भूमि से जन्मी का मतलब वह केवल एक तत्व नहीं है तो वह श्रमशीलता एवं सहनशीलता का प्रतीक है।

बीज शब्द : भूमिजा, नागार्जुन, मिट्टी, भूमि की पुत्री, संघर्ष, नारी, अहिल्या, पाषाण मिथक, साहित्य, पौराणिक, अस्तित्व, स्वाभिमान, मर्यादापुरषोत्तम, धर्मनिष्ट, एकवचनी, आत्मसंघर्ष

भूमिका :

आजकल देखते है की आधुनिक साहित्य मिथकों की ओर जा रहा है। परंतु साहित्य मिथक की ओर जाता है इसका मतलब यह नहीं की साहित्य केवल अतीत का गान करता है बल्कि वह मिथक और साहित्य की जोड़ से आधुनिक समस्याओं का समाधान ढूँढने का प्रयास करता है। इसका एकमात्र उद्देश्य है की सामाजिक विसंगतियों को दुनिया के सामने नंगा करना। मिथक नारी को देवी का रूप देकर पूजने योग्य बनाता है या फिर उसे अबला मानकर सहानुभूति के लिए पात्र बनाता है। नागार्जुन ने आधुनिक मिथक का आधार लेकर पौराणिक सीता को आधुनिक मिट्टी से जोड़ दिया है। नागार्जुन ने भूमिजा के माध्यम से सामाजिक अन्याय के विरुद्ध आवाज उठानेवाली नारी का चित्रण किया है। सीता केवल व्यक्तिगत त्रासदी के विरुद्ध नहीं तो पितृसत्ताक व्यवस्था के विरुद्ध एक सवाल बनकर सामने आती है। भूमिजा समाज में नारी की वास्तविक स्थिति और नारी अस्मिता की पुनःव्याख्या करता है। भूमिजा अनेक अबलाओं की आवाज बन जाता है और पितृसत्ताक प्रथा के प्रतिरोध में नारी अस्तित्व को खोजने का काम करता है। प्रस्तुत खंडकाव्य से ज्ञात होता है कि कैसे पुरुषप्रधान संस्कृति में समाज और राजनीति के उन्नति के नाम पर नारी को बलि का बकरा बनाया जाता है। नागार्जुन यहाँ नारी की इस हालत का पर्दा फ़ाश करते है। भूमिजा की नारी केवल अन्याय का प्रतीक नहीं तो वह स्वाभिमान का द्योतक भी है। अग्निपरीक्षा के बाद भूमि की पुत्री का भूमि में मिल जाना कोई पालयनवादी प्रवृत्ति नहीं तो स्वाभिमान को कायम रखना है। भूमिजा मिथकीय रूप में आधुनिक नारी की व्यथा, वेदना, श्रमप्रतिष्ठा और आत्मसन्मान का ज्वलंत प्रश्न है। प्रस्तुत खंडकाव्य बताता है कि यह मिट्टी से आनेवाले सवाल आज भी उतने ही प्रासंगिक है जीतने त्रेता युग में थे। बस नाममात्र के लिए आधुनिक युग, बदलता समाज, कंधे से कंधा मिलकर चलनेवाला समाज कहा जाता है।

नागार्जुन द्वारा लिखित 'भूमिजा' खंडकाव्य केवल एक नारी की कथा नहीं है तो पुरुष प्रधान समाज के कारण टकराने वाली मानवीय चेतना ज्वलंत दस्तावेज है। जहाँ नारी मिथकीय परंपरा से बाहर निकलकर अन्य स्त्रियों को जीने की राह दिखाती है। भूमिजा को प्रमुख नायिका के रूप में रखकर सामाजिक और मानसिक स्थिति का अत्यंत मार्मिक और समृद्ध चित्रण किया है। शोध आलेख के शीर्षक के अनुसार सीता का मिट्टी से उभरता अस्तित्व, आधुनिक नारी की सजगता स्पष्ट होती है।

1. 'भूमिजा' खंडकाव्य का कथा-सार –

नागार्जुन द्वारा रचित 'भूमिजा' यह खंडकाव्य भारतीय ग्रामीण जीवन और सामाजिक व्यवस्था का यथार्थ चित्र प्रस्तुत करता है। यहाँ नारी का सामाजिक रूप प्रस्तुत होता है। 'भूमिजा' यह मिट्टी से जन्मी, मिट्टी की तरह उपजाऊ, पोषक, सहनशील, शोषित और उपेक्षित नारी का प्रतीक है। प्रस्तुत खंडकाव्य का मूल उद्देश्य नारी जीवन संघर्ष, त्रासदी और नारी की सहनशीलता का चित्रण करना है। नागार्जुन के खंडकाव्य की नारी एक आदर्श नारी के रूप में नहीं तो एक सामान्य ग्रामीण स्त्री के रूप में नजर आती है। जो सामाजिक विवंचना और संरचनाओं में जकड़ी है। जिसे दिनभर श्रम करके परिवार की जिम्मेदारियों को निभाना पड़ता है लेकिन बावजूद इसके उसे निर्णय लेने का अधिकार नहीं है। इस बात को लेकर डॉ. भगवान शरण भारद्वाज कहते है- "समाज रचना में नारी की भूमिका अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण है। लोगों की धारणा किन्हीं कारणों से यह बन गई कि भारतीय संस्कृति नारी को हेय दृष्टि से देखती है और उसकी उन्नति को प्रशंसा के भाव से नहीं देखती।"[8] यहाँ समाज की कटु मानसिकता का चित्रण स्पष्ट होता है। पुरुषप्रधान संस्कृति को अपने सुविधा के लिए नारी का इस्तमाल करते है परंतु उसे कभी तारीफ के योग्य नहीं समझते। कभी भी उसके कार्य की प्रशंसा नहीं करते। क्या सच में नारी का चरित्र इतना हेय होता है? यहाँ डॉ. भगवान शरण भारद्वाज कहते है- "हिंदुओं के अतिरिक्त किसी भी सभ्य जाति ने आज तक भगवान को स्त्री रूप में नहीं देखा, किसी ने कल्पना तक नहीं की। यदि सचमुच हम स्त्री को हेय या नीच समझते तो हम परमेश्वर की कल्पना सरस्वती, दुर्गा, लक्ष्मी आदि रूपों में क्यों करते? देवासुर संग्राम में देवताओं को देवी की शरण में जाते हुए क्यों चित्रित करते?"[9] नारी को देवी का स्थान देकर दिखावे के तौर पर उससे आशीष लिया जाता है, परंतु उसे कभी आदर नहीं दिया जाता। कभी उसके प्रति संवेदनशीलता जताई नहीं जाती। अगर ऐसा ही है तो आशीष लेने का ढोंग किसलिए। नारी को देवी का स्थान किसलिए? ऐसे अनेक सवाल सामने आते है।

भूमिजा की नारी पात्र भी जीवन भर संघर्ष करती हुई दिखाई देती है। उसे घर और बाहरी बातें सब संभालना पड़ता है। बाप के घर में पिता की छत्रछाया तो बाद में पति और पुत्र की आज्ञा में रहना पड़ता है। वह सामाजिक, पारिवारिक शोषण की शिकार है। बच्चों को जन्म देना, उनका पालन-पोषण करना यह नारी की जिम्मेदारी है परंतु उनके जीवन के बारे में कोई निर्णय लेने का अधिकार उसे नहीं है। उसका जीवन पति, बच्चे और परिवार तक ही सीमित है। प्रस्तुत खंडकाव्य सामाजिक संवेदनहीनता को उजागर करता है।

2. पितृसत्तात्मक संरचना और नारी का संघर्ष –

पुरुषप्रधान संस्कृति एवं पितृसत्ताक व्यवस्था में पुरुष को ही हमेशा ऊँचा स्थान दिया जाता है। जिसके इशारों पर नारी के जीवन की नींव निर्भर होती है। उसके कंधे पर सारे कुल की मर्यादा और कुल के सम्मान का सारा बोझ अकेली नारी के कंधे पर डाल दिया जाता है। सीता के पति श्रीराम सामाजिक आयामों के कारण अपनी पत्नी के अधिकार, उसका व्यक्ति स्वातंत्र की बलि चढ़ाते है। यहाँ तक की एक ऋषि की पत्नी को पति के संशय और पुरुषी कपट के कारण अहल्या को श्रापित पाषाण बनकर अनेक सालों तक रहना पड़ा।

"और, वही फिर कुछ क्षण के उपरांत
आकर कहे कि 'निर्लज्जे, धिक्कार!
छोड़ मुझे रमती सुरपति के संग!!
धारण करके वह मेरा ही रूप
आता है नित, कुलटे, तेरे पास!
रखकर पति की छाती पर जो लात
लेती है परसंगति का आस्वाद

1. डॉ. भगवान शरण भारद्वाज, रामचरितमानस और आधुनिक जीवन की समस्याएं, पृष्ट- 140, लोकवाणी संस्थान, शाहदरा, दिल्ली, 2004
2. वही, पृष्ट- 140

उससे तो वेश्या ही है उत्कृष्ट.."
कहो तात, फिर इसमें किसका दोष?"[10]

यहाँ स्पष्ट होता है कि अहिल्या एक ऐसी नारी है जो कपट के चक्रव्यूह में फंस चुकी है, जिसमें उसका कोई दोष नहीं है। इन्द्र अहिल्या के पति का रूप धारण कर बार-बार आश्रम आते, परंतु अहिल्या इन्द्र और गौतम ऋषि के बीच का अंतर नहीं पहचान पाती। लेकिन फिर भी पितृसत्ताक व्यवस्था अहिल्या को ही दोषी साबित कर उसे पाषाण की मूर्ति बनाता है। अहिल्या की कहानी से रघुवंशी राम एक प्रतिज्ञा करते है कि नारी पर कभी अन्याय-अत्याचार नहीं होने देंगे। परंतु वही लोगों की बातों में आकर मर्यादापुरषोत्तम, धर्मनिष्ट, एकवचनी, एकबानी, प्रजापति भी अपनी पत्नी के बारे में यही गलती दोहराते है।

"प्रमाणित क्या करना है मुझे?
पावनता अपनी? अपना शील?
प्रमाणित क्या करना है मुझे?
गुह्य शुचिता? चारित्रिक ओज?
हाय रे राजा! हाय री नीति!
हाय री रूढ़िबद्ध जन-भीति!
हाय रे पुरुष! हाय रे दंभ!
हाय रे एकपक्षीय वह न्याय
इकहरी मर्यादा का बोध
करे साडम्बर नारी-मेध
बने पुरुषोत्तम जग-विख्यात
रचित होगा फिर-फिर इतिहास
हमारा क्या! हम तो हैं घास!"[11]

एक राजा, एक ऐतिहासिक पुरुष होने के बावजूद सच और झूठ, सही और गलत की परख नहीं कर सकते। एक राजा होने के बावजूद भी सिर्फ किसी अपना कर्म निभाने के लिए एक पवित्र आत्मा पर बार-बार शंकाएं उठ रही है, उसे खुद को साबित करने के लिए अग्निपरीक्षा देनी पड़ रही है। डॉ. भगवान शरण भारद्वाज कहते है- "सीता की अग्नि-परीक्षा और वनवास को लेकर इन आरोपों की बौछार और भी तीव्र हो जाती है तथा विनम्रतावश अथवा जड़ता के कारण अधम पात्रों द्वारा नारी के संबंध में की गयी टिप्पणियों को लेकर न केवल रामचरितमानस के पृष्ठ फाड़े जाते हैं बल्कि उसे जलाया भी जाता है।"[12] स्पष्ट होता है की जो राम सीता के साथ गृहस्थी बसाए थे वे इतने सालों बाद भी सीता की पवित्रता से अज्ञात थे परंतु सारी दुनिया सीता की पतिव्रता धर्म को पहचानते थे। क्या यही है हमारी न्यायव्यवस्था। जो छोटीसी बात पर, या किसी के शक पर एक पतिव्रता को गृहस्थी छोड़ने के लिए मजबूर करती है।

3. नारी की सामाजिक पहचान –

भूमिजा खंडकाव्य की नारी समाज में एक स्वतंत्र व्यक्तिमत्व के रूप में नहीं तो वह संबंध-आधारित भूमिका के रूप मे स्पष्ट होता है। जो नारी के रूप में नहीं तो माँ, बहन, पत्नी, बहू, बेटी आदि रूपों में ज्यादा दिखाई देती है। "श्री रामचन्द्र के चरणों में मेरा शत सहस्त्र प्रणाम निवेदित करना। इस स्थिति में मैं जो वनवासिनी हुई हूँ वह पूर्वजन्म के पापों का फल है। इसमें राजा का कोई दोष नहीं। मेरे अंदर यदि दूसरा जीव विद्यमान न होता तो मैं वहीं सरयू में डूबकर अपने को समाप्त कर देती।

3. नागार्जुन, भूमिजा, पृष्ट- 52, राधाकृष्ण प्रकाशन, जगतपुरी, दिल्ली, 2019
4. वही, पृष्ट- 59
5. डॉ. भगवान शरण भारद्वाज, रामचरितमानस और आधुनिक जीवन की समस्याएं, पृष्ट- 143, लोकवाणी संस्थान, शाहदरा, दिल्ली, 2004

परंतु आज मैं वैसा नहीं कर सकती हूँ क्योंकि रघुकुल के विशाल वटवृक्ष का बीजांकुर मेरे भीतर विद्यमान है।"[13] सीता के चरित्र पर एक धोबी ने उंगली उठाई है और उसकी बातों में आकार राम ने सीता का त्याग किया। परंतु सीता के मन में इतनी सहनशीलता भारी है की वह बिना आवाज उठाए राज्यत्याग कर वन में चली जाती है। जीवन को त्याग देने का खयाल भी उसके मन में आता है परंतु आज वह गर्भवती है, रघुकुल का वंश उसके कोक में पल रहा है जिसे मारने का उसे अधिकार नहीं है। आखिर वह माँ जो ठहरी। जो खुद से पहले बच्चों के बारे में सोचती है। ऊपर से हमारी सामाजिक व्यवस्था नारी को बोलने का अधिकार भी नहीं देती। सीता अपने दु:ख को व्यक्त की बिना जीवन की अनिवार्यता मानकर मौन धारण कर लेती है।

4. नारी चेतना और आत्मसंघर्ष –

भूमिजा खंडकाव्य की नारी शुरुआत में तो शोषण और पीड़ा का प्रतीक दिखाई देती है परंतु धीरे-धीरे उसमें एक आंतरिक चेतना जागृत हो जाती है। चेतना का मतलब विद्रोह न होकर मौन प्रश्न, असंतोष और आत्ममंथन है। नागार्जुन ने खंडकाव्य की नारी को क्रांति के रूप में ना चित्रित करते हुए अस्तित्व को समझने वाली नारी के रूप में चित्रित किया है। सीता अपने बच्चों को वापस राजमहल ले जाना चाहती है परंतु एक बार फिर रुकती है- "सीता यहाँ पर आकर ठमक जाती है क्योंकि कलंकिनी का पुत्र अयोध्या का राजा हो इसे वहाँ की प्रजा कैसे बर्दाश्त करेगी। फिर, फिर से राम उद्विग्न होकर लक्ष्मण को आदेश नहीं दे देंगे की लव-कुश कम से कम दस वर्षों के लिए वनवास ग्रहण करें। भला अपनी माँ के कलंक को धोने वाले ये दोनों कैसे शासक हो सकते हैं? फिर तो अपने पुत्रों को वन जाने का आदेश देकर राम भी अपने आप मूर्छित हो जायेंगे। सीता को इस कल्पना से अंदर ही अंदर हँसी भी आ जाती है कि मर्यादा-पालक रघुकुल भला पुत्र-विछोह कैसे सहन कर सकेगा।"[14] सीता अब सहन करने की मानसिकता को छोड़कर आगे बड़ रही है। अपने अस्तित्व को लेकर मन ही मन जीवन के बारे में सोचती है। हमेशा परिवार, पति और बच्चे करनेवाली नारी आज पुत्र वियोग पर पति की दशा की कल्पना में हँस रही है। यानि परिवर्तन की शुरुआत हो चुकी है।

निष्कर्ष :

अंततः हम केह सकते है कि भूमिजा खंडकाव्य केवल नारी की वेदना को स्पष्ट नहीं करता तो भरतीय समाज में नारी की जो स्थिति है उसका सामाजिक दस्तावेज है। सदियों से सहनशील नारी को संवेदना देने का, स्वर देने का कार्य नागार्जुन ने किया है। भूमिजा की नारी शोषित का प्रतीक है, परंतु यह शोषण व्यक्तिगत न होकर सामाजिक है। जहाँ नारी को देवता के रूप में पूजा जाता है, जहाँ उसके आशीष से काम की शुरुआत होती है, वही वह अन्याय और शोषण का प्रतीक दिखाई देती है। परतू अंत में वह चेतना एवं आत्मसंघर्ष का रूप स्वीकार कर लेती है।

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फिल्मों में मिथकीय प्रस्तुतियां

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शोध सार :

इस शोध कार्य में भारतीय सिनेमा में पौराणिक कथाओं पात्रो और प्रतीकों के प्रयोग का विश्लेषण करता है। यह दर्शाता है कि कैसे मिथक सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक मूल्यों को सुदृढ करते हैं। भारतीय संस्कृति को फिल्मों के माध्यम से जीवंत करते हैं और मनोरंजन के साथ-साथ नैतिक संदेश प्रदान करने के लिए दृश्य रूपों का उपयोग करते हैं। मिथक और सिनेमा का संबंध, सिनेमा समाज का दर्पण है और भारतीय फिल्में अक्सर गहरे रूप में मिथकीय(Mythological)रचनाओं से जुड़ी हुई है। यह शोध कार्य इस बात पर केंद्रित है कि, कैसे प्राचीन भारतीय कथाओं, जैसे- रामायण, महाभारत और पुराण को आधुनिक फिल्मों में फिर से प्रस्तुत किया गया है। नायक का विकास शोध में अक्सर अमेरिकी विद्वान "जोसेफ कंपबेल" के सिद्धांतों हवाला दिया जाता है। कि जो बताते है कि, कैसे मिथकीय नायकों की तरह फिल्म के पत्र भी प्रस्थान, ज्ञानोदय और वापसी के चरणों से गुजरते हैं। यह पैटर्न फिल्म की कहानी को अधिक भावात्मक और सांस्कृतिक रूप से प्रासंगिक बनता है। सामाजिक सांस्कृतिक पुनर उत्पादन सामाजिक व्यवस्था को मजबूत करने या प्रश्न उठाने के लिए करती है। मिथकीय प्रस्तुतियां केवल संवादों तक सीमित नहीं है वे रूपों कों, प्रतिको, रंग, वेशभूषा के माध्यम से की जाती है। उदा. दक्षिण भारत फिल्मों में या हिंदी फिल्मों में दृश्य संकेतों का प्रयोग करके सांस्कृतिक पहचान को दर्शाया जाता है। पुरानी कथाओं को नए आधुनिक संदर्भ में देखने के लिए आकर्षित होते है। बदलते समय के साथ तकनीकी प्रगति ने इन मिथकीय दृश्यों को और अधिक भव्य बना दिया है।मिथकीय प्रवृत्तियां केवल पुरानी कहानीयों को दोहराना नहीं है, बल्कि यह भारतीय सिनेमा में रचनात्मक पुनर व्याख्या(Re-Interpretation) का एक सशक्त का तरीका है जो संस्कृति और आधुनिकता के बीच फूल का काम करता है।मिथकीय प्रस्तुतियां दृश्यात्मक भव्यता प्रदान की है, जिससे दर्शकों के लिए, ये कथाएं अधिक प्रभावशाली बन गई है। इस प्रकार सिनेमा मिथक और आधुनिकता के बीच सेतु का कार्य करता है।

बीज शब्द: *मिथकीय, पौराणिक, प्रवृत्तीयां, प्रस्तुतिया, संस्कृति, दृश्यात्मकता, सिद्धांतोंका रूपक, भव्यता सांस्कृतिक संरचना, डिजिटल, माध्यम, अवचेतना, सामूहिक आदि।*

उद्देश्य:

फिल्मों में मिथकिय प्रस्तुतियों का मुख्य उद्देश्य पारंपरिक कहानियां, संस्कृति और पौराणिक पात्रों के माध्यम से दर्शकों से भावनात्मक और सांस्कृतिक जुड़ाव स्थापित करना है। यह सिनेमाई अभिव्यक्ति के सशक्त मनोरंजन पूर्ण और नैतिक शिक्षाओं(धर्म-अधर्म का भेद) के साथ प्रस्तुत करने का एक सशक्त माध्यम है। मिथक आधुनिक संदर्भ में नए अर्थ और बोध प्रदान करते हैं।

1) **सांस्कृतिक और ऐतिहासिक जीवंतता :** - फिल्मो के माध्यम से सदियों पुरानी पौराणिक कथाओंको,पात्रो और मान्यताओं को दर्शकोंके सामने जिवंत करना।
२) **भावात्मक और धार्मिक जुडाव :** - भारतीय संदर्भ में मिथक दर्शकों को धार्मिक विश्वासों,नैतिक शिक्षाओं के माध्यम से भावनाओं से जोड़ते हैं, जिससे यह आसानी से सिनेमा ही दुनिया से जुड़ जाते है।
3) **अस्तित्वगत और दार्शनिक प्रश्न :** - मिथकीय पात्रों के माध्यम से जीवनमृत्यू,अच्छे बुरे के बीच संघर्ष, और मानवी अस्तित्व जैसे गहरे सवालों की पहचान करना।
4) **सरल मनोरंजन :** - पौराणिक कहानियों के दृश्यो और आधुनिक तकनीक से रोचक बनाकर मनोरंजन पैदा करना।

5) **सामाजिक संदेश** : - मिथकों के आवरणमें सामाजिक बदलाव नैतिकता का संदेश देना, जिसमे सामाजिक कुरितियों, को चुनौती दी जा सकती है।

6) **साहित्य और सिनेमा का संबंध :** - साहित्यकृर्तियों को बड़े पर्दे पर उतारकर साहित्य की समझ को जन सामान्य तक फैलाना।

7) **मिथक की अवधारणा का अध्ययन करना :** - भारतीय एवं वैश्विक संदर्भ में 'मिथक' की संकल्पना उसकी उत्पत्ति प्रकार (धार्मिक, लोक, सांस्कृतिक तथा सामाजिक) महत्व का सैद्धांतिक अध्ययन करना।

8) **फिल्मों में मिथकीय तत्वों की पहचान करना :** - विभिन्न फिल्मों में प्रयुक्त देवी देवता, महाकाव्य, पुराण, लोक कथाएं, प्रतीक, कथानक एवं चरित्रों में मिथकीय स्वरूप की पहचान करना।

9) **भारतीय फिल्मों में मिथक और परंपरा का विश्लेषण** : - हिंदी एवं क्षेत्रीय सिनेमा में पुराण, लोक कथाएं, पौराणिक और ऐतिहासिक कहानीयां, इन मिथकोंकी प्रस्तुति के रूप शैली और उद्देश्य का विश्लेषण करना।

10) **आधुनिक सिनेमा में मिथकोंके पुनरपाठ को समझना :** - समकालीन फिल्मों में मिथकों के नए अर्थ, आधुनिक संदर्भ प्रतिकात्मक प्रयोग और पुनव्याख्र्या का अध्ययन करना ।

11) **लोकप्रियता और व्यवसायिकता में मिथक के भूमिका को समझना :** - मिथकीय विषयों पर आधारित फिल्मों की लोकप्रियता, दर्शन, आकर्षक ,और व्यावसायिक सफलता में मिथकोंकी भूमिका का विश्लेषण।

12) **वैश्विक सिनेमा मे मिथकीय प्रस्तुती का तुलनात्मक अध्ययन:** - भारतीय सिनेमा की तुलना हॉलीवुड या अन्य देशों के सिनेमा मे प्रस्तुत मिथकीय कथांओंसें करना।

13) मिथकीय फिल्मों में वैचारिक संदेशों का अध्ययन धर्म, कर्म, नायकत्व, स्त्री शक्ति, बुराई पर अच्छाई की विजय जैसे वैचारिक संदेशों का विश्लेषण करना।

प्रस्तावना:

मानव सभ्यता के आदिकाल से ही, मिथक (Myths) हमारी संस्कृति विश्वास और चेतना के अभिन्न अंग रहे हैं। पौराणिक कथाएं देवता, राक्षस और अलौकिक नायक कि केवल कहानियां नहीं, बल्कि नैतिक मूल्यों की और मानवीय भावनाओं के प्रतीक है। जब सिनेमा ने अपनी विकास यात्रा शुरू की तो वह संभवत इन समृद्ध मिथकीय कथाओं की और आकर्षित हुआ।भारतीय सिनेमा की शुरुआत तो "राजा हरिश्चंद्र "जैसी पौराणिक कहानियों से हुई है ।

फिल्मों में मिथकिय प्रस्तुतियों का तात्पर्य मात्र पौराणिक कथाओं का पुनर्निर्माण नहीं है, बल्कि आधुनिक तकनीक दृश्य कारण और नेरेटिव के माध्यम से उन निरंतर शक्तियों को आज के संदर्भ में प्रासंगिक बनाना है। 'राजा हरिश्चंद्र 'से लेकर आज के 'बाहुबली या ब्रह्मास्त्र' जैसे -फिल्मों तक सिनेमा मिथक कभी सीधे तो कभी प्रतीकात्मक रूप में प्रस्तुत किया है ।इन प्रस्तुतियों का मुख्य उद्देश्य दर्शकों को एक काल्पनिक दुनिया में ले जाकर उन्हें भावनाओं और नैतिक संघर्षों (उदा.अच्छाई बनाम बुराई) से जोड़ना है ।

भारतीय संदर्भ में सिनेमा की भाषा में प्रतीकात्मकता(Symbols) बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण है। जहां त्रिशूल, शंख, यह अग्नि का उपयोग दर्शकों के अवचेतन मन में धार्मिक भावना जगाने के लिए किया जाता हैं। मिथकीय प्रस्तुतियां सिनेमा के लिए शुरुआती दौर से लेकर वर्तमान तक विकास के विभिन्न चरणों से गुजरी है, और दर्शकों पर अपनी छाप छोड़ी है। भारतीय संस्कृति में मिथक केवल धार्मिक आख्यांन न होकर जीवन दर्शन, कर्म सिद्धांत, आदर्श व्यवहार तथा सांस्कृतिक स्मृति के वाहक रहे हैं। रामायण महाभारत पूराण,लोक कथाएं एवं देवी देवताओं से जुड़ी कथाएं। भारतीय समाज के सामूहिक अवचेतन में गहराई से रची बसी है।

आधुनिक युग में जब सिनेमा जनसंचार और मनोरंजन का सबसे प्रभावी माध्यम बनकर उभरा है। तब मिथकीय कथाएं, भी नए रूप में और माध्यम से प्रस्तुत होने लगी। फिल्मों में न केवल प्राचीन मिथकों को दुष्यात्मक रूप दिया।बल्कि उन्हें समकालीन संदर्भ में सामाजिक समस्याओं में और आधुनिक संवेदनाओं के साथ जोड़कर पुनरपरिभाषित किया।

भारतीय सिनेमा के आरंभ से ही मिथकीय कथानकों का विशेष महत्व रहा है। प्रारंभिक मुक सिनेमा से लेकर आधुनिक डिजिटल युग तक पौराणिक फिल्मों ने दर्शकों की आस्था, जिज्ञासा और भावनात्मक जुड़ाव को बनाए रखा है।

फिल्मों में मिथकीय प्रस्तुतियां केवल कथा वाचन तक सीमित नहीं है, बल्कि वे प्रति रूपकों को चरित्र रचना कथानक संरचना और दृश्य भाषा के माध्यम से, मिथको की नई व्याख्या करती है। उदा. स्वरूप नायक की संघर्ष यात्रा अच्छाई और बुराइयों का द्वंद्व,त्याग, कर्तव्य और न्याय जैसे तत्व मिथकीय किया संरचना से प्रेरित होकर आधुनिक फिल्मों में दिखाई देते हैं। इसके साथ ही वैश्वीकरण और तकनीकी विकास के प्रभाव से मिथकीय प्रस्तुतियों में भी परिवर्तन आया है। जहां पारंपरिक मिथकों को नए दृष्टिकोन देखा और समझा जा रहा है। सिनेमा में मिथकों को संरक्षित करता है, उन्हें परिवर्तित करता है, तथा आधुनिक समाज के साथ जोड़ता है साथ ही यह विश्लेषण करता है कि मिथकीय प्रस्तुतियां दर्शकों को सांस्कृतिक चेतना, सामाजिक और मूल्य,बोध को किस प्रकार प्रभावित करती है। फिल्म मिथकों की मौलिकता को बनाए रखती है।प्रारंभिक भारतीय फिल्म जैसे- "राजा हरिश्चंद्र" से लेकर ब्लॉकबस्टर तक मिथकोंनें फिल्म उद्योग की निंव रखी है।

कार्य प्रणाली:

फिल्मों में मिथकीया प्रस्तुतियों का अर्थ है कि, पौराणिक कथाओं, लोक कथाओं और प्रतीकों को आधुनिक संदर्भ में ढालकर प्रस्तुत करना। यह भारतीय सिनेमा जैसे-'राजा हरिश्चंद्र' 'बाहुबली 'में सांस्कृतिक मूल्यों को पृष्ट करने और सामाजिक संदेश देने के लिए प्रयोग किया जाता है। जो 'बुलबुल' या 'कांतारा' जैसी- फिल्मों में नारीवादी या क्षेत्रीय मिथकों के पुनर्निर्माण के रूप में सामने आता है। पौराणिक महाकाव्य भारतीय सिनेमा ने रामायण, महाभारत और अन्य धार्मिक महाकाव्य को आधार बनाकर 'राजा हरिश्चंद्र' (1913) से लेकर आज तक की फिल्मों में पात्रों के माध्यम से भारतीय मानस को जोड़ा है।

मितकीय धार्मिक महाकाव्य चरित्र पर फिल्म बनाने का सिलसिला चल पड़ा रामलीला, रासलीला, पंचतंत्र के साथ अन्य लोक कथाएं और लोकनाट्य तथा फेंटेसी, वाचिक,मौखिक परंपराओं के माध्यम से भारतीय मानस में पहले से मौजूद थे।नए माध्यम के दृश्यात्मक प्रभाव से इस जीवंत कर दिया। मिथकीय कथाएं फिल्म का अनिवार्य हिस्सा हो गई। सैकड़ो फिल्में मिथकीय कथाओं पर बनी। भारत की नहीं, दुनिया के सभी देशों में, मिथ कथाएं, रजत पट का हिस्सा बनी है। अपनी इतिहास और धार्मिक मान्यताओं मि थकों के साथ कोई भी वर्ग, जाति, समुदाय, संप्रदाय या राष्ट्र छेड़छाड़ नहीं चाहता है। उनके साथ उनकी सदियों की अस्थाएं, और भावना ही जुड़ी होती है। मलिक मोहम्मद जायसी के 'पद्मावत' पर कहीं फिल्में भारतीय और विदेशी भाषा में बनी। फिलहाल 'जसवंत झावेरी' की बनी फिल्म "महारानी पद्मिनी"(1964) 'मणि कौल' की 'द क्लाउड डोर' (1994),और' संजय लीला भंसाली' की' पद्मावत' यह फिल्म मिथक का और इतिहास के सवाल में उलझ गई है।' विजय भट ने' वाल्मीकि रामायण पर आधारित' राम राज्य'(1943) में बनाई। हालांकि इन मान्यताओं और संस्कारों की निंव वास्तविकता के आधार थी। अधिक तर कथाओं में या मिथकों को में देवी शक्तियों की पूजा की जाती थी। बहुत सी फिल्में मिथकीय आधार पर बनी।'कलियां मर्दन'(1919) लंका दहन (1917) नल दमयंती(1920) शकुंतला(1920) वीर अभिमन्यु(1922) सावित्री(1923),आदि जैसी धार्मिक फिल्में बनी।

इनके अतिरिक्त प्रल्हाद,ध्रुव, विदुर, संत तुकाराम,संत ज्ञानेश्वर आदि। जैसी चरित्र पर फिल्में बनी। धर्मात्मा(1935) और राधा रानी(1932) देवदास(1935) पारंपरिक कहानी लोकोक्ति और धार्मिक आख्यानों के माध्यम से गहरी सामाजिक सांस्कृतिक और नैतिक संदेश देने की एक कलात्मक तकनीक है। यह केवल प्राचीन कथाओं को दोहराना नहीं है, बल्कि आधुनिक संदर्भों प्रति और नारीवादी दृष्टिकोण के साथ पौराणिक तत्वों को, पुनर परिभाषित करना है। चुड़ैल जैसी लोक कथाओं के नारीवादी रूपांतरण या दिव्या शक्ति की आधुनिक व्याख्या जैसे 'बुलबुल या कांतांरा' में देखा जा सकता है। बाहुबली फिल्म में प्राचीन भारतीय संस्कृति और लोक कथाओं का चित्रण किया गया है। इन मितकीय प्रस्तुतियां के माध्यम से फिल्म निर्माता दर्शकों के सामने समकालीन मुद्दों को पौराणिक संदर्भों के जरिए अधिक प्रभावशाली ढंग से प्रस्तुत करते हैं। फिल्म एक प्रभावशाली दृश्य श्रव्य माध्यम है। जब मिथकिय कथाएं फिल्मों में प्रस्तुत होती है। तो वह परंपरा और

आधुनिकता के बीच सेतु बन जाती हैं। सिनेमा मिथकों को नई व्याख्या देता है। समकालीन संदर्भों से जोड़ता है, जन सामान्य तक सहज रूप में पहुंचता है। इस प्रकार फिल्में मिथको से जीवंत और प्रासंगिक बनाती है।

भारतीय सिनेमा की शुरुआत मिथकीय कथाओं से हुई है, राजा हरिश्चंद्र के बाद रामराज्य, महाभारत,श्री कृष्ण, संत तुकाराम, संत ज्ञानेश्वर जैसी फिल्मों ने धार्मिक मिथकीय कथाओं को जनमानस तक पहुंचाया। आधुनिक सिनेमा में मिथक सीधे कथा के रूप में नहीं, बल्कि प्रतिको और रूपकों के माध्यम से आते हैं। उदा. के लिए नायक को राम या अर्जुन जैसे आदर्शो से जोड़ना। खलनायक को रावण या कंस के प्रतीक रूप में दिखाना, धर्म और अधर्म के संघर्ष को आधुनिक सामाजिक संदर्भ में प्रस्तुत करना।* दैवी पात्र:- राम,कृष्ण, शिव, दुर्गा *नैतिक मूल्य:- सत्य, त्याग, करुणा, न्याय, धार्मिक आस्था को सुदृढ करना। सांस्कृतिक पहचान बनाए रखना। नैतिक मूल्यों का प्रचार ।लोक विश्वास और परंपराओं का संरक्षण आदि।

निष्कर्ष:

फिल्मों में मिथकिय प्रस्तुतीयों के शोध का निष्कर्ष यह है कि, मिथक सिनेमाई भाषा को समृद्ध करने सांस्कृतिक पहचान को मजबूत करने और सामाजिक सांस्कृतिक मुद्दो को संवाद के जरिए सुलझाने का एक शक्तिशाली साधन है। मिथकिय तत्व दर्शकों को जोड़ते हैं, समाज में नैतिक संदेश देते हैं और समकालीन कहानियों को एक कालातीत आयाम प्रदान करते हैं।

मिथक केवल पुरानी कथाओं को दोहराना नहीं है, बल्कि यहां समकालीन समाज में मूल्य, अंधविश्वासों और सांस्कृतिक पहचान को आकार देने या चुनौती देने का काम करते हैं, फिल्मों में मिथकि चित्रों का उपयोग रचनात्मक स्वतंत्रता और व्यापक संभावनाएं प्रदान करता है। मिथकीय फिल्में अक्सर प्रस्थान, ज्ञानोदय और वापसी, जो चरित्र का विकास है। एक सार्वभौमिक सफर पर ली जाती है। पौराणिक कथाओं को नई नई तकनीक के माध्यम से डिजिटल रूप में प्रस्तुत किया जा रहा है। जिस भी आज की युवा पीढ़ी के लिए प्रासंगिक बनी हुई है। हिंदी सिनेमा के विकास में मिथकिय पात्रों ने जाति, नैतिकता और अंधविश्वास जैसे मुद्दों पर जन जागरण का काम किया है।

'मिथकीय की प्रस्तुतियां' फिल्मों में भारतीय दर्शन और आधुनिक सिनेमा तकनीक का एक मिश्रित रूप है, जो कहानी को नया आयाम देते हुए, दर्शन को एक गहन अनुभव प्रदान करती है। भारतीय सिनेमा की आत्मा है, यह केवल मनोरंजन का साधन नहीं, बल्कि संस्कृति परंपरा नैतिकता और सामाजिक चेतना का संवाहक माध्यम है।

आधुनिक तकनीक और नई दृष्टि के साथ मिथक जब सिनेमा में आते है, तो वे समय के साथ चलते हुए भी अपनी मुल आत्मा को बनाये रखते है। भारतीय सिनेमा ने प्राचीन मिथकों को पुराने महाकाव्य लोककथाओं हो आधुनिक तकनीक और समकालीन दृष्टिकोन के साथ प्रस्तुत कर उन्हें जनसामान्य तक पहुंचाने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई है।

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मोनालिसा छायाचित्रातील मिथक आणि सत्य : एक संकल्पनात्मक अभ्यास

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सारांश (Abstract)

लिओनार्डो दा विंची यांचे मोनालिसा हे जगातील सर्वाधिक चर्चिले गेलेले आणि गूढतेने व्यापलेले चित्र मानले जाते. या चित्राभोवती कालांतराने अनेक मिथके निर्माण झाली असून त्यामध्ये मोनालिसाच्या हास्याचे रहस्य, तिची ओळख, डोळ्यांचा पाठलाग करणारा भास तसेच चित्रातील मानसशास्त्रीय घटकांचा समावेश आहे. प्रस्तुत संशोधन पेपर हा संकल्पनात्मक स्वरूपाचा असून मोनालिसा छायाचित्राशी निगडित मिथके आणि त्यामागील ऐतिहासिक, वैज्ञानिक व कलात्मक सत्य यांचा चिकित्सक अभ्यास करण्यात आलेला आहे. या अभ्यासातून लोकप्रिय समजुती आणि शास्त्रीय वास्तव यांमधील भेद स्पष्ट करण्याचा प्रयत्न करण्यात आला आहे.

बीज शब्द : *मोनालिसा: कलाविषयक गैरसमज, दृष्टिभ्रम, मिथके आणि त्यामागील ऐतिहासिक, वैज्ञानिक व कलात्मक सत्य*

प्रस्तावना (Introduction)

कला ही मानवी संस्कृतीची अभिव्यक्ती असून काही कलाकृती इतिहासात अजरामर ठरतात. मोनालिसा हे चित्र त्यापैकीच एक आहे. इ.स. १५०३ ते १५१७ या काळात लिओनार्डो दा विंची यांनी रेखाटलेले हे चित्र आज फ्रान्समधील लूव्र संग्रहालयात सुरक्षित आहे. या चित्राच्या सौंदर्याइतकेच त्याभोवती निर्माण झालेल्या रहस्यमय कथा, तर्क आणि मिथके अभ्यासकांचे लक्ष वेधून घेतात. त्यामुळे मोनालिसा ही केवळ चित्रकलेचा नमुना न राहता कला, मानसशास्त्र आणि विज्ञान यांचा अभ्यास विषय ठरते.

संशोधनाची गरज व महत्त्व (Need and Significance of the Study)

१. कला क्षेत्रातील मिथक निर्मिती प्रक्रियेचे विश्लेषण करणे.
२. ऐतिहासिक सत्य आणि लोकविश्वास यांमधील अंतर स्पष्ट करणे.
३. कला व मानसशास्त्र यांचा परस्परसंबंध अधोरेखित करणे.
४. विद्यार्थ्यांमध्ये आणि संशोधकांमध्ये चिकित्सक विचारसरणी विकसित करणे.
५. जागतिक स्तरावर प्रसिद्ध असलेल्या कलाकृतीचे शास्त्रीय मूल्यमापन करणे.

संशोधनाची उद्दिष्टे (Objectives of the Study)

१. मोनालिसा छायाचित्राशी संबंधित प्रमुख मिथकांचा अभ्यास करणे.
२. मोनालिसा छायाचित्राशी संबंधित मिथकांमागील वैज्ञानिक व ऐतिहासिक सत्य शोधणे.
३. मोनालिसा चित्रातील दृश्य-भासाचे (Optical Illusion) विश्लेषण करणे.
४. मोनालिसा छायाचित्राच्या जागतिक लोकप्रियतेमागील कारणे स्पष्ट करणे.

संशोधन पद्धती (Research Methodology)

प्रस्तुत संशोधन हा संकल्पनात्मक व वर्णनात्मक (Conceptual and Descriptive) स्वरूपाचे आहे.

माहिती संकलनाचे स्त्रोत (Sources of information collection)

प्रस्तुत लेखातील माहिती संकलनासाठी खालील दुय्यम स्रोतांचा वापर करण्यात आला आहे:

१. कला व इतिहासावरील ग्रंथ
२. आंतरराष्ट्रीय संशोधन जर्नल्स
३. लिओनार्डो दा विंची यांच्यावरील अभ्यासपूर्ण लेख
४. मानसशास्त्रीय व दृश्य-भास सिद्धांत

मोनालिसा छायाचित्राशी संबंधित मिथके (Myths Associated with Mona Lisa)

मोनालिसाचे गूढ हास्य : मोनालिसाचे हास्य सतत बदलते आणि ते जिवंत असल्याचा भास निर्माण होतो, अशी सर्वसाधारण धारणा आहे.

डोळ्यांचा पाठलाग करणारी नजर : चित्र कुठूनही पाहिले तरी मोनालिसाची नजर प्रेक्षकांकडेच असल्याचा अनुभव अनेकांना येतो.

मोनालिसा म्हणजे दा विंची यांचे स्वचित्र : काही अभ्यासकांच्या मते मोनालिसा हे स्त्रीरूपातील लिओनार्डो दा विंची यांचे स्वचित्र आहे.

मोनालिसा गरोदर होती : चित्रातील हातांची ठेवण व देहबोली पाहता ती गरोदर असल्याचा दावा केला जातो.

मोनालिसा छायाचित्राशी संबंधित मिथकांमागील सत्य (Truth Behind the Myths)

हास्याचे शास्त्रीय स्पष्टीकरण

स्फुमातो (Sfumato) म्हणजे धुसर बाह्यरेषा व सौम्यसर रंग या तंत्रामुळे प्रकाश व सावलीचा सूक्ष्म खेळ साधला गेला आहे. यामुळे हास्य बदलत असल्याचा दृश्य-भास निर्माण होतो. मोनालिसाच्या ओठांवरील भाव आजही शास्त्रज्ञांसाठी संशोधनाचा विषय आहेत. रंगांच्या सुक्ष्म छटांचा वापर (Blending) करून दा विंची यांनी चेहऱ्यावर अत्यंत जिवंतपणा आणला आहे.

ऑप्टिकल इल्यूजन आणि नजर

सममिती आणि डोळ्यांच्या मध्यवर्ती स्थितीमुळे मोनालिसाचे डोळे आपल्याकडे पाहत असल्याचा भास होतो. हा मानसशास्त्रीय परिणाम आहे. चित्राच्या मागे असलेली काल्पनिक, धुरकट आणि निसर्गदृश्य (aerial perspective) प्रतिमेच्या गूढतेला अधिक वाढवते.

मोनालिसाची ओळख

बहुसंख्य इतिहासकारांच्या मते मोनालिसा म्हणजे लिसा घेरार्डिनी, फ्रांसेस्को डेल जिओकोंडो यांची पत्नी होय. हे चित्र एका मध्ययुगीन इटालियन महिला, 'लिसा घेरार्डिनी' (Lisa Gherardini) हिचे मानले जाते, जी रेशीम व्यापारी फ्रान्सिस्को डेल जिओकोंडोची पत्नी होती.

गरोदरपणाचा दावा : एक तर्क

या दाव्याला कोणतेही ठोस ऐतिहासिक पुरावे उपलब्ध नसून तो केवळ तर्कावर आधारित आहे.

मोनालिसा : कला, मानसशास्त्र आणि विज्ञानाचा संगम

मोनालिसा चित्र मानवी मेंदू दृश्य संकेत कसे ग्रहण करतो, भावना कशा निर्माण होतात आणि सौंदर्याची अनुभूती कशी विकसित होते, याचे उत्तम उदाहरण आहे. त्यामुळे हे चित्र बहुवैज्ञानिक अभ्यासाचे केंद्र बनले आहे. फ्रेंच राजघराण्यांच्या मालकीचे होते. नेपोलियन बोनापार्टच्या बेडरूममध्येही हे चित्र काही काळासाठी होते. १९११ मध्ये ते चोरले गेले होते, ज्यामुळे ते अधिक प्रसिद्ध झाले. लिओनार्दोच्या काळात हे चित्र त्याच्याकडून पहिल्या फ्रान्सिसने विकत घेतले. नंतर ते पॅरिसच्या लूव्ह्र कलासंग्रहालयात ठेवले गेले, तिथून ते १९११ मध्ये चोरीला गेले परंतु पुढे २ वर्षांनंतर त्याचा शोध लागला व आता ते पूर्ववत लूव्र संग्रहालयात ठेवले आहे.

निष्कर्ष (Conclusion)

मोनालिसा छायाचित्राभोवती निर्माण झालेली मिथके ही मानवी कुतूहल, अपूर्ण माहिती आणि दृश्य-भास यांचे परिणाम आहेत. शास्त्रीय अभ्यासातून असे स्पष्ट होते की या मिथकांमागे तांत्रिक कौशल्य आणि मानसशास्त्रीय घटक कार्यरत आहेत. त्यामुळे मोनालिसा प्रतिमा ही केवळ एक कलाकृती न राहता संशोधनाचा जिवंत विषय ठरते. हे चित्र आजही जगातील सर्वात महागडे आणि प्रसिद्ध कलाकृती मानले जाते, ज्यावर अनेक शतकांपासून संशोधन सुरू आहे.

मोनालिसा हे केवळ एक चित्र नसून लिओनार्डो दा विंचीच्या वैज्ञानिक दृष्टीकोन, रंगांवरील प्रभुत्व आणि मानवी भावना टिपण्याच्या क्षमतेचा एक अजोड नमुना आहे. आजही या चित्रातील गूढ भाव आणि पार्श्वभूमीचे तंत्र जगाला भुरळ घालत आहे. चित्र पॅरिसमधील लूव्र म्युझियममध्ये बुलेटप्रूफ काचेच्या मागे संरक्षित आहे, जिथे दरवर्षी लाखो पर्यटक याला भेट देतात.

मोनालिसा या तैलचित्रास "ला जोकोन्दा" या नावानेही ओळखले जाते. या व्यक्तिचित्रासाठी बैठक देणारी स्त्री (जन्म १४७९) ही फ्रांचेस्को डेल जोकोन्दो या फ्लॉरेन्समधील व्यापाऱ्याची पत्नी (विवाह १४९५) होती व तत्कालीन कलासमीक्षक व्हाझारीच्या मतानुसार, जोकोन्दोनेच आपल्या पत्नीचे व्यक्तिचित्र रंगविण्याचे काम लिओनार्दोकडे सोपविले होते असे सन्दर्भ प्राप्त होतात. .

मोनालिसा प्रतिमा कलेच्या इतिहासातील हे एक अजोड व आदर्श व्यक्तिचित्र मानले जाते. त्याने व्यक्तिचित्रणाच्या क्षेत्रात क्रांती घडवून आणली. चित्रातील स्त्रीच्या चेहऱ्यावर जे गूढ, खोल, अथांग भाव दर्शविले आहेत, त्याने लक्षावधी रसिकांना मोहात व संभ्रमात पाडले. त्यायोगे काळाच्या ओघात उत्तरोत्तर चित्राविषयीचे आकर्षण व लोकप्रियता वाढतच गेली आहे. विशेषतः मोनालिसाच्या चेहऱ्यावरचे गूढ मंदस्मित, डोळ्यात लपलेली किंचित खिन्नतेची झाक व पार्श्वभूमीदाखलचे काल्पनिक निसर्गदृश्य हे घटक चित्राच्या गूढतेत अधिक भरच घालतात. त्यामुळे हे प्रत्यक्ष व्यक्तिचित्र असूनही ते वास्तव जगातले न वाटता अदभुतरम्य कल्पनाविश्वातलेच वाटते. त्यातील प्रतीकात्मकतेमुळे ते एका विशिष्ट स्त्रीचे चित्र, एवढ्यापुरतेच मर्यादित न राहता त्याला व्यापक अशा स्त्रीत्त्वाचे परिणाम लाभते. हातांचे कौशल्यपूर्ण रेखाटन व डोळ्यांतील चैतन्यमय भाव यांमुळेही चित्राला अस्सल जिवंतपणा लाभला आहे.

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महाराष्ट्रीयन लोकसंस्कृतीचा उपासक – पोतराज

प्रा. डॉ. शरद गायकवाड
कोल्हापूर

प्रस्तावना

महाराष्ट्रातील लोकसंस्कृती अत्यंत समृद्ध असून कुसाबाहेरच्या अनेकविध जाती-जमाती आणि विविध भटक्या-विमुक्त समाजांनी ती अधिक समृध्द केलेली आहे. या समाजांपैकी **पोतराज** हा एक महत्त्वाचा घटक आहे. देवी अंबाबाई, महालक्ष्मी, तुळजा भवानी या मातृदेवताच्या यल्लम्मा, रेणुका आदींच्या उपासनेशी निगडित असलेला हा समाज लोकधर्म, लोककला व लोकसंगीताच्या परंपरेत महत्त्वाची भूमिका बजावतो. पोतराजांच्या लोकगीतांमधून त्यांच्या श्रद्धा, जीवनपद्धती, दु:ख-वेदना, सामाजिक स्थिती व सांस्कृतिक वारसा यांचे दर्शन घडते.

संशोधनाची उद्दिष्टे

1. पोतराजांच्या लोकगीतांचे स्वरूप अभ्यासणे.
2. लोकगीतांतील धार्मिक, सामाजिक व सांस्कृतिक आशय समजून घेणे.
3. पोतराजांच्या जीवनाशी लोकगीतांचा असलेला संबंध स्पष्ट करणे.
4. महाराष्ट्राच्या सांस्कृतीतील या गीतांचे महत्त्व अधोरेखित करणे.
5.

संशोधन पद्धती

सदर शोध निबंधासाठी वर्णनात्मक व विश्लेषणात्मक पद्धतीचा अवलंब करण्यात आला आहे. प्रत्यक्ष क्षेत्रभेटी, मुलाखती, लोकगीतांचे संकलन तसेच उपलब्ध संदर्भग्रंथांचा अभ्यास करण्यात आला आहे.

थोडक्यात परिचय – पोतराज प्रथा

पोतराज हा भटक्या-विमुक्त समाजातील असून देवीची सेवा, भिक्षावृत्ती व गाणे-वादन व पोतराज नृत्य हे त्यांचे पारंपरिक उपजीविकेचे साधन आहे. अंगाला चाबकाने मारणे, घंटानाद, नृत्य व गान यांच्या माध्यमातून देवीचा जागर करणे ही त्यांची प्रमुख धार्मिक प्रथा आहे.

पोतराजांच्या लोकगीतांचे स्वरूप

पोतराजांची लोकगीते प्रामुख्याने मौखिक परंपरेने चालत आलेली आहेत. ही गीते साध्या ग्रामीण लोकभाषेत, ठेका धरून गायली जातात. लोकसमुहासमोर साभिनय नृत्यनाट्याव्दारे सादर केली जातात. त्यामध्ये पुढील प्रकार आढळतात :

- देवीची स्तुतीपर गीते/ भक्तीगीते
- जागरण गीत/ उपासना गीते/ विधीगीते
- करुण व वेदनामय गीते
- सामाजिक वास्तव मांडणारी गीते

लोकगीतांतील आशय

पोतराजांच्या लोकगीतांमध्ये देवीची महती, भक्तीभाव, समाजातील अन्याय, दारिद्र्य, उपेक्षा, निसर्गाशी नाते व जीवनसंघर्ष यांचे चित्रण आढळते. काही गीतांमधून समाजाच्या वेदना व्यक्त होतात, तर काही गीतांत भावी सुखाची स्वप्ने व श्रद्धेचा सूर दिसून येतो.

सांस्कृतिक व सामाजिक महत्त्व

ही लोकगीते केवळ धार्मिक नसून समाजाच्या इतिहासाची व संस्कृतीची साक्ष देणारी आहेत. पोतराजाची ओळख, परंपरा व अस्तित्व टिकवून ठेवण्यात या लोकगीतांचा मोलाचा वाटा आहे. ग्रामीण लोकसंस्कृतीच्या अभ्यासात या गीतांचे स्थान अत्यंत महत्त्वाचे आहे. पोतराज गीते ही महाराष्ट्राच्या लोकसंस्कृतीचा अविभाज्य घटक आहेत.

पोतराजांची लोकगीते

१. देवीचा जागर/ लक्ष्मीआईची जत्रा यालाचं 'बढान' असेही म्हणतात तर पोतराजाच्या भाषेत याला 'पट्टी मारणे' म्हणतात.

देवीचा जागर ही पोतराजांची प्रमुख धार्मिक परंपरा आहे. रात्रीच्या वेळी ढोल-ताशांच्या तालावर देवीला जागृत करण्यासाठी हे गीत गायले जाते. या गीतांत देवीची स्तुती, तिच्या शक्तीचे वर्णन व भक्तीभाव प्रकट होतो. जागरामुळे भक्तांमध्ये श्रद्धा, भयमिश्रित आदर आणि आध्यात्मिक वातावरण निर्माण होते.

२. **जोगवा (मदान) गीत**

पोतराजांच्या भाषेत याला 'मदान' मागणे असे पश्चिम/ दक्षिण महाराष्ट्रात म्हंटले जाते. जोगवा म्हणजे देवीसाठी मागितलेली भिक्षा. पोतराज गावोगावी फिरून देवीच्या नावाने जोगवा मागतात. या गीतांत देवीची करुणा, भक्तांचे दु:ख, गरिबी व समाजातील विषमता व्यक्त होते. जोगवा मागताना गाण्यातून लोकांशी भावनिक संवाद साधला जातो.

३. **पोतराजाचे आत्मकथन**

या गीतांमधून पोतराज स्वत:चे जीवन, त्याग, हालअपेष्टा, समाजाकडून मिळणारी उपेक्षा व देवीसाठी स्वीकारलेले व्रत सांगतो. आत्मकथनात्मक शैलीमुळे या गीतांना वास्तववादी आणि भावनिक स्वरूप प्राप्त होते.

४. **अंगता देवी येतानाचे उद्गार गीत**

देवी अंगात येणे (देवीचा संचार होणे) हा अत्यंत महत्त्वाचा क्षण असतो. त्या वेळी पोतराजाच्या तोंडून जे शब्द निघतात, ते या गीतांत व्यक्त होतात. हे उद्गार भक्तांसाठी देवीचा संदेश मानले जातात. यात भविष्यवाणी, आशीर्वाद किंवा इशारे असतात.

५. **संकट निवारण गीत**

या गीतांमध्ये देवीकडे संकट दूर करण्याची विनंती केली जाते. आजारपण, दुष्काळ, कौटुंबिक अडचणी, मानसिक त्रास यांपासून मुक्ती मिळावी अशी प्रार्थना या गीतांत आढळते. लोकांच्या श्रद्धेचा हा प्रभावी आविष्कार आहे.

६. **नवरात्र विशेष गीत**

नवरात्र काळात गायली जाणारी ही गीतं देवीच्या नऊ रूपांचे वर्णन करतात. उपवास, जागरण, पूजा, भक्ती यांचे चित्रण यात असते. या गीतांत भक्तीचा उच्चांक आणि उत्सवी वातावरण जाणवते.

७. **शेवटचा जोगवा (समारोप गीत)**

जोगवा पूर्ण झाल्यानंतर गायले जाणारे हे समारोपाचे गीत असते. देवीचे आभार मानणे, पुढील वर्षी पुन्हा येण्याची ग्वाही देणे आणि भक्तांचा निरोप घेणे हा याचा उद्देश असतो. हे गीत भावनिक शांतता आणि समाधान निर्माण करते.

एकूण महत्त्व

पोतराजांची लोकगीते ही धार्मिक, सामाजिक व सांस्कृतिक जीवनाचे प्रतिबिंब आहेत. त्यातून लोकांची श्रद्धा, दु:ख, आशा आणि जीवनदृष्टी व्यक्त होते. ही लोकगीते महाराष्ट्राच्या लोकसांस्कृतिक वारशाचा अमूल्य ठेवा आहेत.

निष्कर्ष

पोतराजांच्या लोकगीतांमधून त्यांच्या जीवनाचा आरसा पाहायला मिळतो. ही गीते त्यांच्या श्रद्धा, संघर्ष व संस्कृतीचे प्रतिबिंब आहेत. बदलत्या काळात या लोकपरंपरेचे जतन व दस्तऐवजीकरण करणे अत्यावश्यक आहे. लोकसाहित्याच्या अभ्यासात पोतराजांच्या लोकगीतांना योग्य स्थान देणे गरजेचे आहे.

भारतीय राज्यघटना आणि फुले, शाहू, आंबेडकर, लहुजी, मुक्ता, अण्णाभाऊ या महापुरुषांच्या विचार व कार्यतत्त्वज्ञानाच्या माध्यमातून बहुजन समाजात आमूलाग्र परिवर्तन झालेले आहे. बहुजनांचे जीवन सर्वांगीण दृष्ट्या उंचावलेले आहे. संविधानात्मक मानवी मूल्यांची रुजवणूक तळागाळातील सर्वसामान्य माणसांपर्यंत झालेली आपणास दिसून येते. अंधश्रद्धा निर्मूलन कायद्याच्या अंमलबजावणीनुसार व प्रबोधन चळवळीच्या प्रभावातून 'पोतराज' प्रथा क्षीण झालेली आहे; परंतु ती समूळ नष्ट होणे अत्यावश्यक आहे. लोकसंस्कृतीचे संचित म्हणून मौखिक परंपरेतून प्राचीन काळापासून लाभलेला समृद्ध वारसा लोकसाहित्य म्हणून संकलित व संपादित करून ठेवायला हवा.

शाळा-कॉलेजांच्या सांस्कृतिक विविध गुणदर्शन कार्यक्रमांतून तसेच विद्यापीठस्तरीय युवा महोत्सवांतून तो विद्यार्थी-कलाकारांमार्फत सादर होताना क्षणभर आनंद होतो; परंतु पिढ्यान्पिढ्या पोतराज म्हणून जीवन जगणाऱ्या लोकांना समाजात मान-सन्मान मिळत नाही, हे एक कटू वास्तव आहे. त्यांना तुच्छ लेखले जाते, कमी दर्जाचे मानले जाते आणि अशा

पोतराजांच्या वाट्याला अपमान, अवहेलना व पेक्षा येत असते. हे सर्व आपण तटस्थपणे कधीतरी गांभीर्याने समजून घ्यायला हवे. या रूढी-प्रथा-परंपरांमुळे त्यांना माणूस म्हणून जगणेही मुश्किल होते. त्यांच्या कौटुंबिक, सामाजिक व वैयक्तिक व्यथा-वेदना आपण सहृदयतेने समजावून घेतल्या पाहिजेत.

९ संदर्भ .

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सारांश (Abstract)

महाभारत हा भारतीय वाङ्मयपरंपरेतील केवळ एक महाकाव्य नसून मानवी जीवनातील धर्म, नीती, कर्तव्य, सत्ता आणि आत्मसंघर्ष यांचे सखोल तात्त्विक चिंतन मांडणारा महान ग्रंथ आहे. या महाकाव्याच्या केंद्रस्थानी असलेले कुरुक्षेत्र हे ऐतिहासिक युद्धस्थळ म्हणून जितके महत्त्वाचे आहे, तितकेच ते प्रतीकात्मक व जीवनदर्शनात्मक अर्थानेही अत्यंत अर्थपूर्ण ठरते. 'धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे' या उद्घोषातूनच व्यासांनी कुरुक्षेत्राला केवळ भौगोलिक प्रदेश न मानता धर्म-अधर्माच्या संघर्षाचे क्षेत्र म्हणून उभे केले आहे.

कुरुक्षेत्राची भौगोलिक व ऐतिहासिक पार्श्वभूमी स्पष्ट करताना त्याचा धार्मिक, तात्त्विक व प्रतीकात्मक अन्वयार्थ शोधण्याचा प्रयत्न करण्यात आला आहे. कुरुक्षेत्र युद्धाची कारणमीमांसा, त्यातील नैतिक संघर्ष, तसेच भगवद्गीतेच्या उपदेशामुळे कुरुक्षेत्राला प्राप्त झालेले आध्यात्मिक महत्त्व यांचा सविस्तर विचार येथे मांडला आहे. विशेषतः अर्जुनाचा विषाद आणि श्रीकृष्णांचा कर्मयोगप्रधान उपदेश यांद्वारे कुरुक्षेत्र हे मानवी जीवनातील अंतर्गत संघर्षांचे प्रतीक कसे ठरते, हे अधोरेखित केले आहे.

कुरुक्षेत्र ही संकल्पना काल, प्रदेश आणि इतिहासाच्या मर्यादा ओलांडून सार्वकालिक जीवनदर्शन मांडणारी ठरते, हे स्पष्ट होते. त्यामुळे महाभारतातील कुरुक्षेत्र हे केवळ युद्धाचे स्थळ न राहता, आधुनिक मानवासाठीही नैतिक निर्णय, विवेक आणि कर्तव्यबोध यांचे प्रभावी मार्गदर्शन करणारे तत्त्वात्मक प्रतीक ठरते, असा निष्कर्ष प्रस्तुत लेखातून समोर येतो.

कीवर्ड्स : कुरुक्षेत्र, धर्मक्षेत्र, महाभारत, भगवद्गीता, जीवनदर्शन

प्रास्ताविक

भारतीय वाङ्मयपरंपरेतील महाभारत हा ग्रंथ मानवी जीवनातील धर्म, नीती, कर्तव्य आणि आत्मसंघर्ष यांचे सखोल व बहुआयामी चिंतन मांडतो. या महाकाव्याच्या केंद्रस्थानी असलेले कुरुक्षेत्र युद्ध हे केवळ ऐतिहासिक किंवा राजकीय संघर्ष न राहता, दीर्घकालीन अधर्म, अन्याय आणि मूल्यसंघर्षाची अपरिहार्य परिणती म्हणून समोर येते. म्हणूनच कुरुक्षेत्र हे केवळ भौगोलिक युद्धस्थळ न मानता, धर्म-अधर्म, कर्तव्य-स्वार्थ आणि विवेक-विकार यांची कसोटी घेणारे तात्त्विक क्षेत्र म्हणून अभ्यासणे आवश्यक ठरते.

महाभारताच्या आरंभी आलेला "धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे" हा उल्लेख युद्धभूमीच्या धार्मिक व नैतिक अधिष्ठानाकडे निर्देश करतो. या युद्धात सहभागी असलेली प्रत्येक व्यक्तिरेखा आपल्या-आपल्या धर्मबोधाच्या कसोटीवर उभी राहते. विशेषतः कुरुक्षेत्रावरच घडलेला भगवद्गीतेचा उपदेश हा संपूर्ण ग्रंथाच्या जीवनदर्शनाचा केंद्रबिंदू ठरतो. अर्जुनाचा विषाद आणि श्रीकृष्णांचा कर्मयोगप्रधान उपदेश मानवी जीवनातील नैतिक द्वंद्व, कर्तव्यबोध आणि आत्मजागरूकतेचे प्रतीक आहेत.

या पार्श्वभूमीवर प्रस्तुत संशोधन लेखाचा मुख्य उद्देश महाभारतातील कुरुक्षेत्र या संकल्पनेचा केवळ ऐतिहासिक दृष्टिकोनातून नव्हे, तर भौगोलिक, धार्मिक, तात्त्विक आणि प्रतीकात्मक अंगांनी अभ्यास करणे हा आहे. तसेच कुरुक्षेत्र युद्धामागील कारणमीमांसा, त्यातून उलगडणारे धर्म-अधर्माचे प्रश्न आणि भगवद्गीतेच्या उपदेशातून प्राप्त होणारे जीवनदर्शन

यांचा सखोल विचार करणे हा या लेखाचा महत्त्वाचा हेतू आहे. यासोबतच कुरुक्षेत्राचा आधुनिक जीवनाशी असलेला अन्वयार्थ स्पष्ट करणे, तसेच समकालीन सामाजिक, राजकीय आणि वैयक्तिक संघर्षांच्या संदर्भात कुरुक्षेत्राची तात्त्विक उपयुक्तता अधोरेखित करणे हा देखील या संशोधनाचा उद्देश आहे. अशा प्रकारे कुरुक्षेत्र ही संकल्पना कालातीत व सार्वकालिक जीवनदर्शन मांडणारी ठरते, हे सिद्ध करण्याचा प्रयत्न प्रस्तुत लेखात करण्यात आला आहे.

कुरुक्षेत्र : भौगोलिक व ऐतिहासिक स्वरूप

कुरुक्षेत्र हा प्रदेश प्राचीन भारतीय इतिहास, धर्म आणि संस्कृती यांचा महत्त्वपूर्ण केंद्रबिंदू मानला जातो. भौगोलिक दृष्ट्या कुरुक्षेत्र आजच्या हरियाणा राज्यात स्थित असून तो यमुना आणि सरस्वती (प्राचीन घग्गर) नद्यांच्या दरम्यानचा सुपीक प्रदेश होता. वैदिक व उत्तरवैदिक काळापासून हा प्रदेश आर्य संस्कृतीचा प्रमुख केंद्र म्हणून ओळखला जातो. कृषीप्रधान जीवनशैली, यज्ञयाग, वेदाध्ययन आणि सामाजिक धार्मिक आचारधर्म यांचे येथे विशेष महत्त्व होते.

पुराणपरंपरेनुसार कुरुक्षेत्राचे नाव कुरु वंशातील प्रतापी राजा 'कुरु' याच्याशी निगडित आहे. राजा कुरुने या प्रदेशात तपश्चर्या करून त्याला धार्मिक पावित्र्य प्राप्त करून दिले, अशी आख्यायिका आढळते. त्यामुळे हा प्रदेश 'धर्मक्षेत्र' म्हणून ओळखला जाऊ लागला. ब्रह्मसरोवर, सन्निहित सरोवर, ज्योतिसर यांसारखी तीर्थस्थळे आजही कुरुक्षेत्राच्या प्राचीन धार्मिक परंपरेची साक्ष देतात. विशेषतः ज्योतिसर हे स्थळ भगवद्गीतेच्या उपदेशाशी संबंधित मानले जाते.

ऐतिहासिक दृष्टीने पाहता, कुरुक्षेत्र हा प्रदेश केवळ धार्मिक केंद्र नसून उत्तर भारतातील एक महत्त्वाचा राजकीय व सांस्कृतिक पट होता. कुरुवंश, पांडव आणि कौरव यांचे राज्यकारभार, सामाजिक संरचना आणि राजकीय संघर्ष या प्रदेशाशी निगडित होते. त्यामुळे महाभारतकालीन युद्धासाठी कुरुक्षेत्राची निवड ही केवळ रणनीतिक कारणांमुळे झालेली नसून, त्यामागे धार्मिक व नैतिक अधिष्ठानही होते. पवित्र मानल्या गेलेल्या भूमीवर लढले जाणारे युद्ध हे धर्माच्या कसोटीवर उतरवले जाणारे युद्ध ठरते, ही संकल्पना येथे प्रकर्षाने दिसून येते.

महाभारतात कुरुक्षेत्राचे वर्णन केवळ भौगोलिक प्रदेश म्हणून न करता, त्याला ऐतिहासिक स्मृती आणि धार्मिक पावित्र्य यांची जोड दिलेली आहे. त्यामुळे येथे घडलेले युद्ध हे साधे सत्तासंघर्ष न राहता, संपूर्ण आर्य समाजाच्या मूल्यव्यवस्थेचे प्रतीक बनते. भौगोलिकदृष्ट्या मर्यादित असले तरी ऐतिहासिक व सांस्कृतिक दृष्ट्या कुरुक्षेत्राचे स्थान अत्यंत व्यापक आणि महत्त्वपूर्ण ठरते.

अशा प्रकारे कुरुक्षेत्र हे एकाच वेळी भौगोलिक वास्तव, ऐतिहासिक स्मृती आणि धार्मिक पावित्र्य यांचे संमिश्र रूप आहे. या बहुआयामी स्वरूपामुळेच महाभारतातील कुरुक्षेत्र युद्धाला केवळ ऐतिहासिक घटना न मानता, तात्त्विक आणि जीवनदर्शनात्मक अर्थ प्राप्त होते.

धर्मक्षेत्र व कुरुक्षेत्र : संकल्पनात्मक अर्थ:

महाभारताच्या प्रारंभी येणारा प्रसिद्ध श्लोक— "धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः" हा केवळ कथानकाची सुरुवात करणारा नाही, तर संपूर्ण महाभारताच्या तत्त्वज्ञानाचा संकेत देणारा आहे. या श्लोकात 'कुरुक्षेत्र' या भौगोलिक प्रदेशाला 'धर्मक्षेत्र' अशी विशेषणयुक्त ओळख दिली आहे. युद्धभूमीचे वर्णन करताना 'धर्मक्षेत्र' ही संज्ञा वापरणे हे व्यासांचे अत्यंत सूक्ष्म आणि गहन तात्त्विक भान दर्शवते.

धर्मक्षेत्र : संकल्पनात्मक स्वरूप: धर्म' ही संकल्पना भारतीय तत्त्वज्ञानात केवळ धार्मिक कर्मकांडापुरती मर्यादित नसून, कर्तव्य, नीती, सत्य, न्याय, सामाजिक जबाबदारी आणि आत्मसंयम यांचा समन्वय साधणारी व्यापक संकल्पना आहे. त्यामुळे 'धर्मक्षेत्र' म्हणजे असा अवकाश जिथे मानवी आचार-विचार, कर्तव्यबोध आणि नैतिक निर्णय यांची कसोटी लागते. महाभारतातील युद्धभूमीला धर्मक्षेत्र म्हणणे याचा अर्थ असा की, येथे लढले जाणारे युद्ध हे केवळ बाह्य शत्रूविरुद्ध नसून, अंतर्गत विवेक आणि स्वार्थ यांच्यातील संघर्षाचे रूप आहे. प्रत्येक योद्धा आपल्या धर्माच्या समजुतीनुसार निर्णय घेत आहे आणि त्या निर्णयाचे नैतिक परिणाम स्वीकारत आहे.

कुरुक्षेत्र : भौगोलिकतेपलीकडील अर्थ: कुरुक्षेत्र' हा शब्द प्रथमदर्शनी एका विशिष्ट भौगोलिक प्रदेशाकडे निर्देश करतो; मात्र महाभारतात त्याला प्रतीकात्मक विस्तार प्राप्त होतो. कुरुवंशाशी निगडित हा प्रदेश पवित्र मानला जात असल्यामुळे, येथे

घडणाऱ्या प्रत्येक कृतीला नैतिक अधिष्ठान प्राप्त होते. कुरुक्षेत्र हे केवळ युद्धासाठी निवडलेले स्थळ नसून, धर्माच्या कसोटीवर मानवाच्या आचरणाची परीक्षा घेणारे क्षेत्र बनते. त्यामुळे कुरुक्षेत्र ही संकल्पना इतिहासाच्या मर्यादेपलीकडे जाऊन मानवी जीवनातील संघर्षांचे रूपक ठरते.

धर्मक्षेत्र आणि कुरुक्षेत्र यांचे तात्त्विक नाते: धर्मक्षेत्र' आणि 'कुरुक्षेत्र' यांचा परस्परसंबंध हा केवळ शब्दांचा योगायोग नसून तात्त्विक विधान आहे. कुरुक्षेत्र हे बाह्य रूप आहे, तर धर्मक्षेत्र हा त्याचा अंतःसत्त्वार्थ आहे. बाह्य युद्धभूमीवर लढले जाणारे युद्ध हे प्रत्यक्षात धर्माच्या संकल्पनेभोवती फिरणारे आहे. भीष्म, द्रोण, कर्ण, अर्जुन, युधिष्ठिर यांसारखी पात्रे ही युद्धात सहभागी असूनही त्यांच्या अंतर्गत संघर्षांमुळे धर्मक्षेत्राचे स्वरूप अधिक गहिरे होते. कोणाचा धर्म योग्य, कोणाचा अधर्म—हा प्रश्न महाभारतात निश्चित उत्तर देत नाही; उलट वाचकाला आत्मपरीक्षणासाठी प्रवृत्त करतो.

संकल्पनात्मक अर्थाचा जीवनदर्शनाशी संबंध: धर्मक्षेत्र - कु रुक्षेत्र ही संकल्पना मानवी जीवनातील प्रत्येक निर्णयप्रक्रियेशी जोडलेली आहे. प्रत्येक व्यक्तीचे मन हेच खरे कुरुक्षेत्र आहे, जिथे सतत सद्विचार आणि दुर्विचार, कर्तव्य आणि स्वार्थ, नीती आणि लाभ यांचा संघर्ष चालू असतो. या अर्थाने महाभारतातील कुरुक्षेत्र हे केवळ ऐतिहासिक युद्धस्थळ न राहता, सार्वकालिक जीवनदर्शन मांडणारे प्रतीक ठरते. म्हणूनच 'धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे' हा श्लोक संपूर्ण मानवी जीवनाच्या तत्त्वज्ञानाचा संक्षिप्त सार मानला जातो.

कुरुक्षेत्र युद्ध : कारणमीमांसा: महाभारतातील कुरुक्षेत्र युद्ध हे केवळ एका क्षणात उद्भवलेले युद्ध नसून, दीर्घकाळ साचलेल्या अन्याय, अधर्म, सत्तालोलुपता आणि नैतिक अधःपतन यांची अपरिहार्य परिणती आहे. या युद्धामागील कारणे व्यक्तिगत, कौटुंबिक, सामाजिक, राजकीय आणि तात्त्विक अशा अनेक स्तरांवर विभागता येतात. त्यामुळे कुरुक्षेत्र युद्धाची कारणमीमांसा ही केवळ ऐतिहासिक घटनांची मांडणी न राहता, मानवी स्वभाव आणि मूल्यसंघर्षांचे सखोल विश्लेषण ठरते.

राज्यसत्ता व उत्तराधिकाराचा प्रश्न: कुरुवंशातील राज्यसत्तेच्या उत्तराधिकाराचा प्रश्न हे युद्धाचे मूलभूत कारण ठरते. धृतराष्ट्राचे अंधत्व आणि गांधारीची अंधनिष्ठ मातृत्वभावना यांमुळे कौरवांना राज्यावर एकाधिकाराची भावना निर्माण झाली. दुसरीकडे, पांडव हे कायदेशीर वारस असूनही त्यांना हक्कांपासून वंचित ठेवण्यात आले. या अन्यायकारक व्यवस्थेमुळे संघर्षाला प्रारंभ झाला.

द्यूतसभा आणि द्रौपदीचा अपमान: महाभारतातील द्यूतसभा ही युद्धाची निर्णायक घटना मानली जाते. शकुनीच्या कपटनीतीमुळे युधिष्ठिराने द्यूतात सर्वस्व गमावले. द्रौपदीला सभेत ओढून आणून केलेला अपमान हा केवळ एका स्त्रीचा नव्हता, तर संपूर्ण धर्मव्यवस्थेचा अपमान होता. या घटनेमुळे अधर्माचा कळस गाठला गेला आणि युद्ध अपरिहार्य झाले.

वचनभंग आणि राजनैतिक अपयश: वनवास आणि अज्ञातवास पूर्ण केल्यानंतरही पांडवांना त्यांच्या राज्याचा हक्क देण्यास दुर्योधनाने नकार दिला. श्रीकृष्णांनी केलेल्या शांतिदूताच्या प्रयत्नांनाही कौरवांनी नाकारले. "सुईच्या टोकाएवढी भूमीही देणार नाही" हा दुर्योधनाचा हट्ट युद्धाची अपरिहार्यता स्पष्ट करतो. राजनैतिक संवाद अपयशी ठरल्यावर युद्ध हाच अंतिम मार्ग उरतो.

व्यक्तीगत अहंकार आणि स्वार्थ: कुरुक्षेत्र युद्धामागे अनेक पात्रांचा व्यक्तिगत अहंकार, सूडभावना आणि स्वार्थ कारणीभूत ठरतात. दुर्योधनाचा सत्तालोलुप अहंकार, शकुनीची कपटबुद्धी, कर्णाची आंधळी निष्ठा, तसेच भीष्म व द्रोण यांची मौनसंमती यांमुळे अधर्म अधिक बळकट झाला. येथे अधर्म केवळ कृतीत नव्हे, तर मौनातही आहे, हे स्पष्ट होते.

धर्म - अधर्माचा संघर्ष: महाभारत युद्धाचे सर्वांत महत्त्वाचे कारण म्हणजे धर्म-अधर्माचा संघर्ष. पांडव आणि कौरव हे केवळ दोन पक्ष नसून दोन जीवनदृष्टींचे प्रतिनिधी आहेत. अधर्म दीर्घकाळ टिकत नाही, हा भारतीय तत्त्वज्ञानाचा मूलसिद्धांत येथे प्रत्यक्षात येतो. अधर्माचा नाश आणि धर्माची पुनर्स्थापना हे युद्धाचे तात्त्विक कारण ठरते.

सामाजिक व नैतिक अधःपतन: महाभारतकालीन समाजात राजसत्ता, नातेसंबंध आणि गुरु-शिष्य परंपरा यांचे नैतिक अधःपतन झाल्याचे दिसते. ज्येष्ठ, गुरु आणि विद्वान व्यक्ती अन्याय होत असतानाही मौन बाळगतात, ही बाब समाजाच्या अपयशाचे द्योतक आहे. या सामूहिक अपयशातूनच युद्ध जन्माला येते.

युद्धाची अपरिहार्यता : तात्त्विक निष्कर्ष: महाभारतातील युद्ध हे टाळता न येणारे ठरते, कारण अधर्माने सर्व मर्यादा ओलांडल्या होत्या. युद्ध हा कोणाचाही विजय नसून, तो संपूर्ण समाजाच्या नैतिक अपयशाचा परिणाम आहे. भीष्म, द्रोण, कर्ण, अभिमन्यू यांसारख्या महावीरांचा मृत्यू हे युद्धाच्या विनाशकारी स्वरूपाचे द्योतक आहे. अशा प्रकारे कुरुक्षेत्र युद्धाची कारणमीमांसा मानवी स्वभाव, सत्ता आणि धर्म यांच्या संघर्षाचे गहन विश्लेषण सादर करते. त्यामुळे हे युद्ध केवळ ऐतिहासिक घटना न राहता, सार्वकालिक नैतिक चेतावणी ठरते.

कुरुक्षेत्र आणि भगवद्गीता : महाभारतातील कुरुक्षेत्र युद्ध आणि भगवद्गीतेचा उपदेश यांचा परस्परसंबंध अत्यंत अर्थपूर्ण आणि तात्त्विक दृष्ट्या महत्त्वाचा आहे. भगवद्गीता ही केवळ धार्मिक ग्रंथ नसून मानवी जीवनातील कर्तव्य, नैतिक द्वंद्व, आत्मबोध आणि कर्मसिद्धांत यांचे सार्वकालिक जीवनदर्शन मांडणारा तत्त्वग्रंथ आहे. हा उपदेश युद्धभूमीवर, म्हणजेच कुरुक्षेत्रावर घडतो, ही बाब विशेष महत्त्वाची आहे.

कुरुक्षेत्र : गीतेच्या उपदेशाचे योग्य अधिष्ठान: कुरुक्षेत्र हे धर्म-अधर्माच्या संघर्षाचे प्रतीक असल्यामुळे, भगवद्गीतेसारख्या तत्त्वज्ञानप्रधान उपदेशासाठी ते अत्यंत योग्य अधिष्ठान ठरते. शांत आश्रमात किंवा तपोभूमीत दिलेला उपदेश जीवनाच्या प्रत्यक्ष संघर्षाशी तितका थेट जोडलेला नसता; परंतु युद्धाच्या उंबरठ्यावर उभ्या असलेल्या अर्जुनाला दिलेला उपदेश हा प्रत्यक्ष जीवनातील संकटांशी थेट संवाद साधणारा ठरतो. त्यामुळे भगवद्गीतेचा उपदेश हा केवळ तात्त्विक नसून व्यवहारप्रधानही आहे.

अर्जुनाचा विषाद : मानवी मानसिक संघर्षाचे प्रतीक: कुरुक्षेत्रावर अर्जुनाला आलेला विषाद हा एका योद्ध्याचा वैयक्तिक दुर्बलपणा नसून, तो संपूर्ण मानवजातीच्या मानसिक संघर्षाचे प्रतीक आहे. आप्तस्वकीयांशी युद्ध करण्याची नैतिक कोंडी, हिंसेबद्दलची घृणा आणि कर्तव्याविषयीचा संभ्रम यांमुळे अर्जुन युद्ध टाळू इच्छितो. हा विषाद म्हणजे मानवी जीवनातील निर्णयाच्या क्षणी निर्माण होणारे नैतिक द्वंद्व होय.

श्रीकृष्णांचा उपदेश : कर्मयोगाचे तत्त्वज्ञान: श्रीकृष्णांनी अर्जुनाला दिलेला उपदेश हा कर्मयोग, भक्तियोग आणि ज्ञानयोग यांचा समन्वय साधणारा आहे. विशेषतः निष्काम कर्मयोगाचा सिद्धांत गीतेचा केंद्रबिंदू ठरतो. कर्तव्य हे फलाशेशिवाय पार पाडणे, हा उपदेश अर्जुनाच्या युद्धकर्तव्याला तात्त्विक अधिष्ठान देतो. येथे युद्धाचे समर्थन नव्हे, तर कर्तव्यपालनाची नैतिक दिशा स्पष्ट केली जाते.

कुरुक्षेत्राचे रूपांतर : युद्धभूमी ते आध्यात्मिक क्षेत्र: भगवद्गीतेच्या उपदेशामुळे कुरुक्षेत्र हे केवळ युद्धभूमी न राहता आध्यात्मिक जागृतीचे केंद्र बनते. बाह्य युद्धापेक्षा अंतर्गत संघर्ष अधिक महत्त्वाचा आहे, हा तत्त्वबोध येथे अधोरेखित होतो. त्यामुळे कुरुक्षेत्र हे मानवी मनातील अज्ञान, आसक्ती आणि मोह यांच्याविरुद्ध लढण्याचे प्रतीक ठरते.

जीवनदर्शनात्मक अन्वयार्थ: कुरुक्षेत्र आणि भगवद्गीता यांचा परस्परसंबंध मानवी जीवनातील प्रत्येक संघर्षाशी जोडलेला आहे. जीवनातील प्रत्येक निर्णायक क्षण हे एक कुरुक्षेत्र असते, आणि त्या क्षणी विवेकपूर्ण निर्णय घेण्यासाठी गीतेचा उपदेश मार्गदर्शक ठरतो. म्हणूनच भगवद्गीता ही युद्धग्रंथ नसून जीवनग्रंथ ठरते.

तात्त्विक निष्कर्ष: अशा प्रकारे कुरुक्षेत्र आणि भगवद्गीता यांचे नाते हे युद्ध आणि तत्त्वज्ञान यांचे अनोखे संमीलन आहे. कुरुक्षेत्र हे संघर्षाचे प्रतीक आहे, तर भगवद्गीता त्या संघर्षातून योग्य मार्ग दाखवणारे जीवनदर्शन आहे. त्यामुळे महाभारतातील कुरुक्षेत्र हे केवळ विनाशाचे नव्हे, तर आत्मबोध आणि नैतिक जागृतीचे क्षेत्र ठरते.

कुरुक्षेत्राचा प्रतीकात्मक अर्थ (मिथकात्मक दृष्टिकोन)

महाभारतातील कुरुक्षेत्र हे ऐतिहासिक व भौगोलिक वास्तव असले तरी, त्याचे खरे सामर्थ्य त्याच्या प्रतीकात्मक आणि मिथकात्मक अर्थात दडलेले आहे. भारतीय मिथकपरंपरेत मिथक (Myth) ही केवळ काल्पनिक कथा नसून, मानवी जीवनातील गहन सत्ये, मानसिक संघर्ष आणि सांस्कृतिक मूल्ये रूपकात्मक पद्धतीने व्यक्त करणारी संरचना असते. या दृष्टीने कुरुक्षेत्र हे एक व्यापक जीवनमिथक ठरते.

कुरुक्षेत्र : मानवी मनाचे प्रतीक: मिथकात्मक पातळीवर कुरुक्षेत्र हे मानवी मनाचे प्रतीक मानले जाते. मानवी मनात सतत सद्विचार-दुर्विचार, धर्म-अधर्म, कर्तव्य-स्वार्थ, विवेक-विकार यांचा संघर्ष सुरू असतो. हा अंतर्गत संघर्ष म्हणजेच खरे कुरुक्षेत्र

होय. बाह्य युद्ध हे या अंतर्गत संघर्षाचे दृश्य रूप आहे. त्यामुळे महाभारतातील युद्ध हे प्रत्यक्षात मनोवैज्ञानिक आणि नैतिक संघर्षाचे रूपक ठरते.

पात्रे : अंतर्गत शक्तींची रूपके

- कुरुक्षेत्र युद्धातील विविध पात्रे ही मानवी मनातील विविध प्रवृत्तींची प्रतीके आहेत.
- पांडव हे धर्म, विवेक आणि नैतिक मूल्यांचे प्रतीक आहेत.
- कौरव हे अहंकार, लोभ, द्वेष आणि सत्तालालसेचे प्रतिनिधित्व करतात.
- अर्जुन हा निर्णयक्षमतेच्या द्वंद्वात सापडलेला सामान्य मानव आहे.
- श्रीकृष्ण हा अंतर्मनातील विवेक, आत्मज्ञान आणि मार्गदर्शक तत्त्वाचा प्रतीकात्मक अवतार आहे. या अर्थाने कुरुक्षेत्र युद्ध हे एका व्यक्तीच्या मनात चाललेल्या संघर्षाचे मिथकीय नाट्य ठरते.

युद्ध : नैतिक कसोटीचे मिथक: मिथकात्मक दृष्टिकोनातून युद्ध म्हणजे हिंसा नव्हे, तर नैतिक कसोटी आहे. मनुष्य जेव्हा निर्णायक टप्प्यावर उभा राहतो, तेव्हा त्याला योग्य-अयोग्य यांचा निवड करावी लागते. ही निवड म्हणजेच युद्ध. कुरुक्षेत्र हे त्या निवडीचे प्रतीक आहे. येथे विजय किंवा पराभव भौतिक नसून नैतिक असतो.

धर्मक्षेत्र : मूल्यसंघर्षाचे मिथक: धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे' हा उद्घोष कुरुक्षेत्राला मूल्यसंघर्षाचे मिथक बनवतो. धर्म येथे स्थिर नियम नसून परिस्थितीनुसार बदलणारी नैतिक जाणीव आहे. त्यामुळे कोण पूर्णपणे धर्मी किंवा अधर्मी नाही, हे मिथकात्मक सत्य महाभारत मांडते. मानवी जीवनातील नैतिक गुंतागुंत या मिथकातून स्पष्ट होते.

कालातीत मिथक : सार्वकालिक अन्वयार्थ: कुरुक्षेत्राचे मिथक इतिहासाच्या मर्यादेत बंदिस्त राहत नाही. प्रत्येक युगात, प्रत्येक समाजात आणि प्रत्येक व्यक्तीच्या जीवनात कुरुक्षेत्र पुन्हा पुन्हा उभे राहते. आधुनिक समाजातील सत्ता-संघर्ष, नैतिक अध:पतन, मूल्यसंघर्ष हे सर्व कुरुक्षेत्राच्या मिथकाचेच समकालीन रूप आहे.

मिथकात्मक निष्कर्ष: अशा प्रकारे कुरुक्षेत्र हे केवळ महाभारतकालीन युद्धस्थळ न राहता, मानवी जीवनातील अंतर्गत संघर्षांचे, नैतिक निर्णयांचे आणि आत्मसंघर्षाचे कालातीत मिथक ठरते. या मिथकातून महाभारत मानवाला हेच सांगते की, जीवन हे स्वत:च एक कुरुक्षेत्र आहे आणि प्रत्येक व्यक्तीला त्या कुरुक्षेत्रात विवेकाच्या मार्गाने आपले युद्ध लढावे लागते.

समकालीन संदर्भातील कुरुक्षेत्र

महाभारतातील कुरुक्षेत्र ही संकल्पना केवळ ऐतिहासिक किंवा पौराणिक चौकटीत मर्यादित न राहता, समकालीन जीवनाशीही तितकीच सुसंगत ठरते. आजचे सामाजिक, राजकीय, आर्थिक आणि वैयक्तिक जीवन हे विविध प्रकारच्या संघर्षांनी व्यापलेले आहे. या संघर्षांचे स्वरूप बदलले असले, तरी त्यामागील मानवी प्रवृत्ती—सत्ता, स्वार्थ, अहंकार, लोभ, नैतिक द्वंद्व—या महाभारतकालीन परिस्थितीशी साम्य दर्शवतात. म्हणूनच कुरुक्षेत्र ही संकल्पना आधुनिक काळातही प्रभावी प्रतीक म्हणून उभी राहते.

सामाजिक संदर्भातील कुरुक्षेत्र: समकालीन समाजात मूल्यसंघर्ष, नैतिक अध:पतन, अन्याय आणि विषमता यांचे प्रश्न प्रकर्षाने दिसून येतात. सामाजिक न्याय, स्त्री-सन्मान, मानवी हक्क, जातीय व आर्थिक विषमता या मुद्द्यांवर समाजात सतत संघर्ष सुरू असतो. या पार्श्वभूमीवर प्रत्येक व्यक्ती आणि संस्था ही आपल्या भूमिकेतून धर्म-अधर्माच्या कसोटीवर उभी असते. अन्यायाविरुद्ध मौन बाळगणे हेही अधर्माचेच रूप आहे, ही जाणीव कुरुक्षेत्राच्या तत्त्वज्ञानातून समकालीन समाजाला मिळते.

राजकीय जीवनातील कुरुक्षेत्र: आधुनिक राजकारणात सत्ता, स्वार्थ, भ्रष्टाचार आणि नैतिकता यांतील संघर्ष सतत दिसून येतो. लोकशाही मूल्ये, संविधानिक जबाबदाऱ्या आणि सत्तेचा गैरवापर यांमधील संघर्ष हे आधुनिक कुरुक्षेत्राचे स्वरूप आहे. येथेही 'धर्म' म्हणजे केवळ कायदा नव्हे, तर लोकहित, नैतिकता आणि जबाबदारी होय. त्यामुळे राजकीय निर्णयप्रक्रिया ही कुरुक्षेत्रासारखीच धर्माची कसोटी ठरते.

व्यावसायिक व आर्थिक क्षेत्रातील कुरुक्षेत्र: आजच्या स्पर्धात्मक युगात यश, लाभ आणि नैतिकता यांमधील संघर्ष अधिक तीव्र झाला आहे. प्रामाणिकपणा विरुद्ध फसवणूक, गुणवत्ता विरुद्ध सत्तासंबंध, सामाजिक जबाबदारी विरुद्ध नफा—हे सर्व आधुनिक जीवनातील कुरुक्षेत्राचे पैलू आहेत. अशा परिस्थितीत योग्य निर्णय घेणे म्हणजेच आधुनिक अर्थाने धर्मयुद्ध लढणे होय.

वैयक्तिक जीवनातील कुरुक्षेत्र: समकालीन मानवाच्या वैयक्तिक जीवनातही कुरुक्षेत्र सतत उपस्थित आहे. नातेसंबंध, करिअर, मूल्यनिष्ठा, कर्तव्य आणि स्वार्थ यांतील संघर्ष हे प्रत्येक व्यक्तीच्या जीवनातील अंतर्गत युद्ध आहे. अर्जुनाचा विषाद आजच्या माणसाच्या मानसिक अस्वस्थतेचे प्रतीक ठरतो. अशा वेळी विवेक, आत्मचिंतन आणि जबाबदारी यांवर आधारित निर्णय घेणे हेच गीतेचे जीवनदर्शन आधुनिक काळात मार्गदर्शक ठरते.

माध्यमे आणि वैचारिक संघर्ष: समकालीन काळात माध्यमे आणि सामाजिक माध्यमांमुळे वैचारिक संघर्ष अधिक तीव्र झाले आहेत. सत्य-असत्य, तथ्य-प्रचार, विवेक-भावनिक उन्माद यांमधील संघर्ष हेही आधुनिक कुरुक्षेत्राचे स्वरूप आहे. येथे प्रत्येक नागरिक विवेकपूर्ण भूमिका घेतो की नाही, हे महत्त्वाचे ठरते.

समकालीन निष्कर्ष: अशा प्रकारे समकालीन जीवनातील प्रत्येक स्तर—सामाजिक, राजकीय, आर्थिक आणि वैयक्तिक—हा एक स्वतंत्र कुरुक्षेत्र आहे. महाभारतातील कुरुक्षेत्र हे इतिहासापुरते मर्यादित न राहता, आजच्या मानवासाठी नैतिक दिशा देणारे जीवनदर्शन ठरते. बदलत्या काळातही धर्म, विवेक आणि कर्तव्य यांचे महत्त्व अबाधित राहते, हेच कुरुक्षेत्राच्या समकालीन संदर्भातून अधोरेखित होते.

निष्कर्ष

महाभारतातील कुरुक्षेत्र हे केवळ ऐतिहासिक युद्धस्थळ नसून मानवी जीवनातील धर्म, नीती, कर्तव्य आणि आत्मसंघर्ष यांचे कालातीत प्रतीक आहे. कुरुक्षेत्र युद्धामागील कारणमीमांसा, 'धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे' या संकल्पनेचा तात्त्विक अर्थ, भगवद्गीतेचा उपदेश, तसेच मिथकात्मक व समकालीन संदर्भातील विश्लेषण यांद्वारे कुरुक्षेत्राचा बहुआयामी अन्वयार्थ स्पष्ट होतो.

महाभारतातील युद्ध हे सत्तासंघर्षाचे अंतिम रूप असले तरी त्यातून कोणाचाही खरा विजय होत नाही. भीष्म, द्रोण, कर्ण, अभिमन्यू यांसारख्या श्रेष्ठ योद्ध्यांचा नाश हा संपूर्ण समाजाच्या नैतिक अपयशाचे प्रतीक ठरतो. यावरून असे दिसून येते की, अधर्म दीर्घकाळ सहन केला गेला तर संघर्ष अपरिहार्य ठरतो आणि त्याचे परिणाम सर्वांनाच भोगावे लागतात.

कुरुक्षेत्रावर अर्जुनाला आलेला विषाद आणि श्रीकृष्णांनी दिलेला गीतेचा उपदेश हे मानवी जीवनातील नैतिक द्वंद्वाचे आणि योग्य निर्णयप्रक्रियेचे प्रतीक आहेत. त्यामुळे कुरुक्षेत्र ही संकल्पना इतिहासापुरती मर्यादित न राहता, प्रत्येक युगातील आणि प्रत्येक व्यक्तीच्या जीवनातील संघर्षांचे रूपक ठरते. समकालीन सामाजिक, राजकीय व वैयक्तिक जीवनातही कुरुक्षेत्राचे तत्त्वज्ञान तितकेच लागू पडते, हे या अभ्यासातून अधोरेखित होते.

वैचारिक निर्णयप्रक्रिया: वैयक्तिक, सामाजिक व राजकीय निर्णय घेताना केवळ लाभ किंवा स्वार्थ नव्हे, तर नैतिकता, न्याय आणि सामाजिक जबाबदारी यांना प्राधान्य देणे आवश्यक आहे.

मौनाची जबाबदारी ओळखणे: अन्यायाविरुद्ध मौन बाळगणे हेही अधर्माचेच रूप आहे, ही जाणीव निर्माण करणे महत्त्वाचे आहे. सामाजिक अन्याय, शोषण आणि भ्रष्टाचाराविरोधात विवेकपूर्ण भूमिका घेणे आवश्यक ठरते.

संवाद व समेटाची संस्कृती: युद्ध अपरिहार्य होण्यापूर्वी संवाद, समजूतदारपणा आणि समेटाचे मार्ग प्रामाणिकपणे अवलंबणे ही कुरुक्षेत्र युद्धातून मिळणारी महत्त्वाची शिकवण आहे.

गीतेचे जीवनदर्शन शिक्षणात समाविष्ट करणे: भगवद्गीतेतील कर्मयोग, निष्काम कर्तव्य आणि आत्मसंयम यांचे तत्त्व शिक्षणव्यवस्थेत मूल्यशिक्षणाच्या रूपाने समाविष्ट करणे आवश्यक आहे.

वैयक्तिक आत्मपरीक्षणाची सवय: प्रत्येक व्यक्तीने आपल्या जीवनातील 'कुरुक्षेत्र' ओळखून, विवेकाच्या आधारे निर्णय घेण्याची सवय लावणे ही सर्वांत प्रभावी उपाययोजना ठरते.

अशा प्रकारे महाभारतातील कुरुक्षेत्र हे केवळ भूतकाळातील युद्ध न राहता, वर्तमान आणि भविष्यकाळासाठीही नैतिक दिशा देणारे जीवनदर्शन ठरते. धर्म, विवेक आणि कर्तव्य यांच्या संतुलनातूनच मानवी जीवनातील संघर्षांचे समाधान शक्य आहे, हा संदेश कुरुक्षेत्राच्या तत्त्वज्ञानातून अधोरेखित केला आहे.

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मध्ययुगीन महाराष्ट्रातील ऐतिहासिक दंतकथा आणि तथ्ये

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मध्ययुगीन महाराष्ट्राचा इतिहास हा केवळ सत्तांतरांचा कालक्रम नसून तो सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक परिवर्तन, राजकीय क्रांती आणि मौखिक परंपरांचे एक गुंतागुंतीचे जाळे आहे. साधारणपणे इसवी सन १३१७ मध्ये देवगिरीच्या यादव साम्राज्याच्या पतनापासून ते १८१८ मधील पेशवाईच्या अस्तापर्यंतच्या कालखंडाला महाराष्ट्राचा मध्ययुगीन काळ मानले जाते.[1] या कालखंडातील ऐतिहासिक सत्याचा शोध घेताना 'बखर' साहित्यातील दंतकथा, पोवाड्यांमधील वर्णन आणि समकालीन दस्तऐवजांमधील तथ्ये यांची तुलना करणे अपरिहार्य ठरते. ऐतिहासिक संशोधनामध्ये दंतकथांना पूर्णपणे नाकारता येत नाही, कारण त्या लोकस्मृतीचा आणि प्रादेशिक अस्मितेचा भाग असतात, तरीही शास्त्रीय इतिहासलेखनात पुराव्यांच्या आधारे त्यांचे विच्छेदन करणे आवश्यक असते.[2]

मध्ययुगीन महाराष्ट्राची राजकीय पार्श्वभूमी आणि यादवांचा अस्त

महाराष्ट्रातील मध्ययुगाची सुरुवात ही हिंदू साम्राज्यांच्या अस्ताने आणि मुस्लिम सत्तेच्या आगमनाने झाली. १३ व्या शतकाच्या अखेरीस देवगिरीचे यादव हे महाराष्ट्रातील सर्वात शक्तिशाली सत्ता होते. सेऊण यादव स्वतःला भगवान श्रीकृष्णाचे वंशज मानत आणि त्यांची सत्ता केवळ महाराष्ट्रापुरती मर्यादित नसून मध्य प्रदेश आणि कर्नाटकच्या काही भागांपर्यंत विस्तारलेली होती.[3] यादवांच्या काळातच मराठी भाषेला राजभाषेचा दर्जा मिळाला आणि वारकरी संप्रदायाचा पाया रचला गेला. परंतु, १२९६ मध्ये अलाउद्दीन खिलजीच्या स्वारीने यादवांच्या वैभवाला धक्का बसला आणि १३१७ मध्ये दिल्लीच्या सुल्तानांनी हे राज्य पूर्णपणे खालसा केले.[1]

या राजकीय उलथापालथीमुळे महाराष्ट्रातील जुनी सरदारकी पूर्णपणे नष्ट झाली. यादवांच्या पतनानंतर साधारण ३० वर्षे दिल्लीच्या सुल्तानांचे या प्रदेशावर थेट वर्चस्व होते, परंतु १३४७ मध्ये बहामनी राज्याची स्थापना झाल्यामुळे दख्खनमध्ये एका स्वतंत्र सत्तेचा उदय झाला.[1] बहामनी राजवटीच्या काळात महाराष्ट्राच्या प्रशासकीय आणि आर्थिक रचनेत महत्त्वाचे बदल झाले. या काळात हिंदू सैन्य आणि अधिकाऱ्यांना प्रशासनात स्थान मिळू लागले, ज्यातून पुढे मराठा वतनदारांचा उदय झाला.[1]

ऐतिहासिक साधनांचे विश्लेषण: बखर साहित्य आणि विश्वासार्हता

मराठी इतिहासलेखनातील सर्वात महत्त्वाचे आणि तितकेच वादग्रस्त साधन म्हणजे 'बखर'. 'बखर' या शब्दाची उत्पत्ती 'खबर' या फारसी शब्दापासून झाली आहे, ज्याचा अर्थ बातमी किंवा वृत्तांत असा होतो.[7] १७ व्या आणि १८ व्या शतकात लिहिलेल्या या बखरींमध्ये ऐतिहासिक घटनांचे वर्णन करताना अनेकदा दैवी चमत्कार, अतिशयोक्ती आणि काल्पनिक प्रसंगांची सरमिसळ झालेली आढळते. विश्वनाथ काशिनाथ राजवाडे यांनी बखरींचे वैज्ञानिक विश्लेषण करताना असे मत मांडले की, बखरी लिहिणारे लेखक हे वैज्ञानिक दृष्टिकोनापेक्षा राजांची स्तुती करण्याकडे अधिक कल असलेले होते.[7]

राजवाडे यांनी बखरींचे तीन मुख्य प्रकारांत वर्गीकरण केले आहे: समकालीन लेखकांनी लिहिलेल्या बखरी, ऐकीव माहितीवर आधारित बखरी आणि जुन्या बखरींच्या नकला.[8] यामध्ये कृष्णाजी अनंत सभासद यांनी लिहिलेली 'सभासद बखर' (१६९४) ही शिवाजी महाराजांच्या चरित्रासाठी सर्वात जुनी आणि महत्त्वाची मानली जाते.[7] तरीही, या बखरीतही भवानी देवीने प्रत्यक्ष प्रकट होऊन महाराजांना तलवार दिली, असे वर्णन आढळते, जे ऐतिहासिक तथ्यापेक्षा श्रद्धेचा भाग अधिक वाटते.[7]

प्रमुख बखरी आणि त्यांचे वैशिष्ट्यपूर्ण योगदान

इतिहास संशोधकांच्या मते, खालील बखरी ऐतिहासिक सत्याचा शोध घेण्यासाठी महत्त्वपूर्ण ठरतात:

बखरीचे नाव	लेखक / काळ	मुख्य विषय	त्रुटी / मर्यादा
सभासद बखर	कृष्णाजी अनंत सभासद (१६९४)	शिवाजी महाराजांचे जीवन.[7]	दैवी चमत्कारांचे वर्णन.[7]
चितणीस बखर	मल्हार रामराव चितणीस (१८१०)	भोसले वंशाचा इतिहास.[10]	कालानुक्रमे अनेक चुका.[10]
महिकावतीची बखर	केशव आचार्य (१५ वे शतक)	उत्तर कोकण आणि मुंबईचा इतिहास.[11]	भाषेचा क्लिष्टपणा.[11]
शेडगावकर बखर	अज्ञात	मराठा घराण्यांची माहिती.[7]	काही ठिकाणी विसंगत माहिती.[7]

मध्ययुगीन "अंधारयुग" आणि धार्मिक समन्वयाचे वास्तव

महाराष्ट्रातील मुस्लिम राजवटीच्या काळाला अनेकदा "अंधारयुग" (Dark Age) असे संबोधले जाते. ही धारणा प्रामुख्याने मंदिर विध्वंस, जिझिया कर आणि सक्तीच्या धर्मांतराच्या घटनांवर आधारित आहे.[4] मात्र, आधुनिक संशोधक जसे की दुशान डिएक, हा कालखंड केवळ विनाशाचा नव्हता तर तो धार्मिक समन्वयाचाही होता असे प्रतिपादन करतात.[14]

या कालखंडात पंढरपूरची वारी आणि वारकरी संप्रदाय कोणत्याही अडथळ्याविना सुरू होता. संत भानुदास यांनी विजयनगरच्या राजाने नेलेली विठ्ठलाची मूर्ती पुन्हा पंढरपूरला आणल्याची दंतकथा प्रसिद्ध आहे.[14] जर मुस्लीम राजवट पूर्णपणे हिंदूविरोधी असती, तर ही वारी आणि भक्ती चळवळ इतकी बहरली नसती. याउलट, या काळातच अनेक हिंदू-मुस्लिम सांस्कृतिक संकर पाहायला मिळतात. उदाहरणार्थ, विजापूरच्या सुलतानांनी सरस्वती आणि गणेशाची उपासना केल्याचे संदर्भ मिळतात.[14] ब्राह्मणांनी प्रशासकीय आणि हिशोबी कामांची धुरा सांभाळली, तर मराठा सरदारांनी महसूल गोळा करण्याची जबाबदारी (पाटीलकी आणि देशमुखी) पार पाडली.[4] यामुळेच या काळात एक प्रकारची सामाजिक-धार्मिक सहिष्णुता निर्माण झाली होती, जिचा फायदा पुढे स्वराज्याच्या निर्मितीसाठी झाला.

शिवाजी महाराज आणि अफजल खान भेट: दंतकथांच्या पलीकडील रणनीती

प्रतापगडाच्या पायथ्याशी झालेली शिवाजी महाराज आणि अफजल खान यांची भेट ही महाराष्ट्रातील ऐतिहासिक स्मृतीचा केंद्रबिंदू आहे. लोकपरंपरेत ही घटना म्हणजे "अधर्मावर धर्माचा विजय" अशा प्रकारे रंगवली जाते.[12] कवी अज्ञानदास यांनी रचलेला पोवाडा या घटनेचे अत्यंत नाटकीय वर्णन करतो, ज्यामध्ये महाराजांना भवानी देवीचा आशीर्वाद असल्याचे सांगितले आहे.[12]

मात्र, लष्करी आणि राजकीय दृष्टिकोनातून ही भेट म्हणजे एका रणनीतीचा भाग होती. अफजल खान हा विजापूरचा एक बलाढ्य सेनापती होता, ज्याला मोकळ्या मैदानात हरवणे कठीण होते. म्हणूनच महाराजांनी त्याला जावळीच्या घनदाट अरण्यात खेचले, जिथे मुघल किंवा आदिलशाही सैन्य प्रभावहीन ठरले असते.[15] १० नोव्हेंबर १६५९ रोजी झालेली ही घटना केवळ वैयक्तिक संघर्षाचा भाग नव्हती, तर ती गनिमी काव्याचा (Ganimi Kava) एक उत्कृष्ट प्रयोग होता. समकालीन फारसी साधने आणि मराठी बखरींमध्ये कोणाकडून "दगा" झाला याबद्दल मतभेद असले तरी, ही घटना स्वराज्याच्या अस्तित्वासाठी निर्णायक ठरली.[6]

सिंहगडची लढाई आणि तानाजी मालुसरे: घोरपड की मानवी शौर्य?

कोंढाणा किल्ल्याच्या विजयासाठी तानाजी मालुसरे यांनी दिलेले बलिदान हा मराठी इतिहासातील एक अजरामर अध्याय आहे. या लढाईशी संबंधित सर्वात मोठी दंतकथा म्हणजे 'यशवंती' नावाची घोरपड.[17] असे मानले जाते की, तानाजींनी घोरपडीच्या कंबरेला दोर बांधून तिला कड्यावर चढवले आणि तिच्या मदतीने मावळ्यांनी किल्ला सर केला.[17]

ऐतिहासिक तथ्यांचे विश्लेषण करताना अनेक संशोधक या घोरपडीच्या कथेला नाकारतात. शास्त्रीय दृष्ट्या, एका घोरपडीत मानवी वजन पेलण्याची शक्ती नसते.[22] इतिहासकारांच्या मते, 'घोरपड' हे कदाचित कडा चढणाऱ्या निष्णात

मावळ्यांचे टोपणनाव असावे किंवा 'घोरपडे' आडनावाच्या एखाद्या मावळ्याने हे साहसी कृत्य केले असावे.[22] ४ फेब्रुवारी १६७० रोजी झालेली ही लढाई तानाजींच्या रणनीतीचा विजय होता. त्यांनी सर्वात अवघड मानला जाणारा 'कल्याण' दरवाजाकडील कडा रात्रीच्या वेळी चढून पार केला, जिथे मुघल सैन्याची सुरक्षा कमी होती.[17] तानाजींच्या मृत्यूच्या बातमीने महाराज दुःखी झाले आणि "गड आला पण सिंह गेला" असे उद्गार त्यांनी काढले, ज्यामुळे किल्ल्याचे नाव 'सिंहगड' झाले.[23] २०१९ मध्ये सिंहगडावरील तानाजींच्या मूळ समाधीचे अवशेष सापडले, जे या ऐतिहासिक घटनेची आणि तानाजींच्या वास्तव अस्तित्वाची साक्ष देतात.[23]

कोल्हापूरची शिलाहार राजवट आणि करवीर महात्म्य

कोल्हापूरचा इतिहास हा दंतकथा आणि पुरातत्व पुराव्यांचा एक सुंदर मिलाफ आहे. पौराणिक कथेनुसार, महालक्ष्मीने कोल्हासूर राक्षसाचा वध केला, म्हणून या प्रदेशाला 'कोल्हापूर' हे नाव पडले.[29] मात्र, ऐतिहासिक दृष्ट्या कोल्हापूर हे ८ व्या ते १३ व्या शतकापर्यंत शिलाहार राजांच्या सत्तेखाली होते.[29] शिलाहार हे मूळचे राष्ट्रकुटांचे मांडलिक होते आणि पुढे त्यांनी आपली स्वतंत्र सत्ता स्थापन केली.[32]

शिलाहार राजांनी केवळ कोल्हापूरमध्येच नव्हे, तर कोकण आणि सातारा जिल्ह्यांतही आपली सत्ता गाजवली. खिद्रापूरचे कोपेश्वर मंदिर आणि कोल्हापूरचे महालक्ष्मी मंदिर यांच्या बांधकामात किंवा विस्तारात शिलाहार राजांचे मोठे योगदान होते.[29] शिलाहार राजे जैन धर्माचे मोठे आश्रयदाते होते. राजा भोज दुसरा हा या वंशातील शेवटचा बलाढ्य राजा होता, ज्याने पन्हाळा किल्ल्यावरून राज्य केले.[29] १२१२ च्या सुमारास देवगिरीच्या यादवांनी शिलाहारांचा पराभव करून हे राज्य खालसा केले.[29]

मध्ययुगीन समाजरचना: वतनदारी आणि जातींचे राजकारण

मध्ययुगीन महाराष्ट्राच्या सामाजिक रचनेचा कणा म्हणजे 'वतन' पद्धत. मराठा समाजात वतनाला केवळ आर्थिक महत्त्व नसून ते प्रतिष्ठेचे लक्षण मानले जाई.[4] पाटील, कुलकर्णी आणि देशमुख हे गावगाड्याचे मुख्य अधिकारी होते. आश्चर्याची गोष्ट म्हणजे, सुरुवातीच्या काळात या वतनदारांनी शिवाजी महाराजांच्या स्वराज्याला विरोध केला होता, कारण स्वराज्यामुळे त्यांच्या वतनी हक्कांवर गदा येण्याची भीती त्यांना होती.[4]

या काळात जातीव्यवस्थेतही एक प्रकारची लवचिकता होती. महसूल गोळा करण्यासाठी मराठा आणि ब्राह्मण एकत्र काम करत असत.[4] भक्ती चळवळीने खालच्या वर्गातील लोकांनाही आध्यात्मिक प्रतिष्ठा मिळवून दिली. संत चोखामेळा, संत सावता माळी, आणि संत नामदेव यांसारख्या संतांनी जातीपातीच्या भिंती तोडण्याचा प्रयत्न केला.[34] जरी राजकीय सत्ता मुस्लिमांकडे असली, तरी सामाजिक व्यवहार प्रामुख्याने हिंदू धर्मशास्त्रावर आधारित होते, ज्याला 'अपरार्क' सारख्या ग्रंथांनी वैचारिक आधार दिला होता.[33]

गड-किल्ल्यांचे स्थापत्य आणि लष्करी रणनीती

महाराष्ट्राचा इतिहास किल्ल्यांशिवाय अपूर्ण आहे. शिवाजी महाराजांनी आपल्या रणनीतीत किल्ल्यांना सर्वोच्च स्थान दिले होते. किल्ल्यांच्या दुर्गमतेचा वापर करून त्यांनी जगातील सर्वात मोठ्या साम्राज्यांना (मुघल आणि आदिलशाही) जेरीस आणले.[5] नळदुर्ग किल्ल्याचा जलमहाल किंवा रायगडाची तटबंदी ही तत्कालीन स्थापत्यशास्त्राची आणि लष्करी कल्पकतेची अत्युच्च उदाहरणे आहेत.[5]

किल्ल्यांच्या बांधणीत गनिमी काव्यासाठी पूरक अशा अनेक युक्त्या वापरल्या जात. उदाहरणार्थ, किल्ल्याचे दरवाजे अशा ठिकाणी बांधले जात की ते लांबून शत्रूला दिसू नयेत. तसेच, किल्ल्याच्या आत पाण्याचे साठे आणि धान्याची कोठारे अशा पद्धतीने बनवली जात की शत्रुने वेढा घातला तरी अनेक महिने किल्ला लढवता येईल.[5] सिंधुदुर्ग आणि विजयदुर्ग यांसारख्या जलदुर्गांनी भारताच्या सागरी सीमांचे रक्षण केले आणि युरोपियन सत्तांना धाकात ठेवले.[6]

मोडी लिपी: मध्ययुगीन कागदपत्रांची किल्ली

मध्ययुगीन महाराष्ट्राचा मूळ इतिहास समजून घेण्यासाठी 'मोडी' लिपीचे ज्ञान असणे अपरिहार्य आहे. १२ व्या शतकात यादवांच्या काळात हेमाद्री पंडिताने ही लिपी सुरू केली, असे मानले जाते. शिवकाळात आणि पेशवाईत सर्व प्रशासकीय

व्यवहार मोडी लिपीतच होत असत.[36] ऐतिहासिक संशोधनात मोडी लिपीचे महत्त्व अनन्यसाधारण आहे, कारण अनेक महत्त्वाच्या सनदा, पत्रे आणि 'दप्तर' आजही या लिपीत असून ते पूर्णपणे उलगडलेले नाहीत.[36]

पुण्यातील भारत इतिहास संशोधक मंडळ आणि विविध संस्थांनी मोडी लिपीतील कागदपत्रे संकलित करून त्यावर संशोधन केले आहे.[7] इतिहास संशोधक ग. ह. खरे आणि वि. का. राजवाडे यांनी आयुष्यभर या कागदपत्रांचा अभ्यास करून इतिहासातील अनेक दंतकथांना तथ्यांच्या कसोटीवर उतरवले.[8]

निष्कर्ष: दंतकथांमधून तथ्यांकडे

मध्ययुगीन महाराष्ट्रातील ऐतिहासिक दंतकथा या केवळ काल्पनिक कथा नसून त्या तत्कालीन समाजाच्या आकांक्षा आणि मूल्यांचे प्रतिबिंब आहेत. शिवाजी महाराजांचे चरित्र किंवा तानाजी मालुसरे यांचे बलिदान या घटनांमध्ये जरी दैवी चमत्कारांची भर घातली गेली असली, तरी त्यामागील मानवी शौर्य आणि रणनीती पूर्णपणे सत्य आहे.[6] ऐतिहासिक संशोधनाचे काम या दंतकथांना नाकारणे नसून त्यातील सत्याचा अंश शोधणे हे आहे.

यादवांच्या पतनानंतर सुरू झालेला अंधकार भक्ती चळवळीच्या प्रकाशाने आणि शिवछत्रपतींच्या पराक्रमाने दूर झाला. महाराष्ट्राची प्रादेशिक अस्मिता ही या संघर्षातूनच निर्माण झाली आहे.[2] आज आपण जेव्हा या इतिहासाकडे पाहतो, तेव्हा आपल्याला केवळ लढाया दिसत नाहीत, तर एक प्रगत समाजरचना, समृद्ध स्थापत्य आणि धार्मिक समन्वयाचे एक महान उदाहरण पाहायला मिळते. दंतकथा आणि तथ्ये यांच्यातील ही सीमाच महाराष्ट्राच्या इतिहासाला एक वेगळी खोली आणि आकर्षण प्रदान करते.

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सिंहासन बत्तीसी दंतकथातून प्रतित होणाऱ्या मूल्यांची आजच्या शिक्षणातील उपयुक्तत्ता

डॉ. सरिता आण्णासो मोरे
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सहाय्यक प्राध्यापक

सांराश :

भारतीय संस्कृतीत कथा साहित्याला नैतिक शिक्षणाचे प्रभावी माध्यम मानले जाते. भारतीय वाङ;मय परंपरेत दंतकथांना विशेष स्थान आहे. इतिहास, मिथक व लोकविश्वास यांच्या संमिश्रणातून निर्माण झालेल्या दंतकथा समाजाच्या मूल्यव्यवस्थेचे प्रतिबिंब आहे. सिंहासन बत्तीसी ही भारतीय लोकसाहित्य व दंतकथांच्या परंपरेतील महत्त्वाची ग्रंथरचना आहे. सिंहासन बत्तीसी ही राजा विक्रमादित्य यांच्या पराक्रम, न्यायप्रियता आणि सदगुणांवर आधारित दंतकथांची मालिका आहे. राजाभोजला प्राचीन सिंहासन मिळते. त्या सिंहासनावर ३२ बाहुल्या (बत्तीसी) असतात. जेव्हा भोजराजा सिंहासनावर बसू लागला कीं, प्रत्येक बाहुली त्याला राजा विक्रमादित्यांची एक कथा सांगते. आणि कथा सांगितल्यानंतर कथेच्या शेवटी बाहुली विचारते- "तुझ्यात विक्रमादित्यांसारखी नित्तिमत्ता आहे का? यावर भोजराजा स्वत:ला अपुरा मानतो आणि सिंहासनावर बसत नाही. अशाप्रकारे ३२ कथा सांगितल्या जातात. या कथांमधून आदर्श राजधर्म, नित्तिमत्ता, न्याय, सत्यनिष्ठा, पराक्रम, करुणा आणि प्रजाहित या मूल्यांचे दर्शन घडते, प्रस्तुत संशोधनात सिंहासन बत्तीसी मधील नित्तिमत्ता तत्त्वांचे विश्लेषण करून त्यांचे सामाजिक, शैक्षणिक व नैतिक महत्त्व अधोरेखित करण्यात आले आहे. प्राचीन काळातील नैतिक मूल्ये आजच्या शिक्षणात कितपत उपयुक्त आहेत. याचा अभ्यास या संशोधनाचा केंद्रबिंदू आहे.

प्रस्तावना :

भारतीय कथा साहित्य हे केवळ मनोरंजनाचे साधन नसून ते नैतिक, सामाजिक व सांस्कृतिक मूल्यांचे प्रभावी माध्यम आहे. सिंहासन बत्तीसी हा ग्रंथ नैतिकमूल्यांचा खजिना असून तो राजा विक्रमादित्यांच्या आदर्श जीवनाचे प्रतिक आहे. *'सिंहासन बत्तीसी'* ची मूळ कथा संस्कृत भाषेत आढळते. नंतर ती प्राकृत, अपभ्रंश, हिंदी, मराठी व इतर भारतीय भाषांत प्रसृत झाली. मौखिक परंपरेतून पिढ्यांन-पिढ्या चालत आलेल्या या कथांनी लोकमानसात खोलवर स्थान मिळवले आहे. या कथा आजच्या विद्यार्थ्यांच्या,समाजातील मूल्यसंवर्धन, सामाजिक शिस्त आणि नेतृत्त्व विकासासाठी मार्गदशक ठरू शकतात.

संशोधनाची गरज व महत्त्व :

आजच्या काळात मूल्यघसरण, नैतिक संभ्रम, नेतृत्त्वातील अपयश व सामाजिक विसंवाद वाढवताना दिसतो. अशा परिस्थितीत पारंपारिक मूल्यांचा शैक्षणिक व सामाजिक संदर्भात पुर्नविचार करण्याची गरज आहे. लोकसाहित्याचा आधुनिक समाजाशी संबंध अभ्यासणे आवश्यक ठरते. तसेच सिंहासन बत्तीसीतील कथांतून नैतिक शिक्षणाचे प्रभावी साधन उपलब्ध होते. आणि आजच्या समाज्याला या कथेतून बोध घेऊन मुल्यांची उपयुक्तत्ता लक्षात घेऊन ती विद्यार्थ्यामध्ये रुजवणे आवश्यक आहे आणि आजच्या काळाची गरज आहे.

प्रस्तुत विषय अभ्यासताना सिंहासन बत्तीसीतील कथांचे समाजोपयोगी पैलू , त्यांची आजच्या समाजाशी सुसंगती तसेच मूल्यशिक्षण व जीवनकौशल्य विकासाच्या दष्टीने त्यांचे महत्त्व आहे कारण या दंतकथामधून सत्य, न्याय, प्रामाणिकपणा, कर्तव्यनिष्ठा रुजविण्यास मदत करणे, आदर्श नेतृत्त्वाचे गुण समजून घेण्यास उपयुक्त. तसेच सामाजिक सलोखा, न्याय व समानतेवर आधारित समाजनिर्मितीस प्रोसाहन. सांस्कृतिक जतन यामध्ये आपल्या भारतीय लोकसाहित्याचे, या दंतकथांचे संवर्धन व पुनरुज्जीवन महत्त्वाचे आहे.

संशोधनाची उद्दिष्टे :

१. सिंहासन बत्तीशी दंतकथांतील प्रमुख मूल्यांचा अभ्यास करणे.

२. आजच्या शिक्षणात सिंहासन बत्तीसी दंतकथांतील मुल्यांची उपयुक्तत्ता स्पष्ट करणे.

संशोधनाची पद्धत्ती :

प्रस्तुत संशोधनासाठी वर्णनात्मक व विश्लेषणात्मक पद्धत्तीचा अवलंब करण्यात आला आहे. प्राथमिक स्त्रोत्र : सिंहासन बत्तीसी (मराठी अनुवाद) दुय्यम स्त्रोत्र: संदर्भ ग्रंथ, संशोधन लेख, नियतकालिके

सिंहासन बत्तीसी ग्रंथ परीचय :

हा संस्कृत भाषेतील कथासंग्रह असून त्यात ३२ कथा आहेत.प्रत्येक कथा सिंहासनावरील एका पुतळ्याद्वारे राजा भोज यांना सांगितली जाते. या कथांमधून राजा विक्रमादित्यांची योग्यता, चारित्र्य व नैतिकमूल्ये उलगडली आहेत.

सिंहासन बत्तीसी कथांचे थोडक्यात सारांश :

१.सत्यपालानाची कथा — विक्रमादित्य सत्यासाठी प्राणांचीही पर्वा करत नाही. **२.न्यायनिष्ठा राजा-** शत्रू असला तरी न्यायाने निर्णय देतो. **३.वचन पूर्ती-** दिलेले वचन पूर्ण करण्यासाठी मोठा त्याग करतो. **४. दानशूरता-** योग्य व्यक्तीस योग्य वेळी दान करणे. **५. दयेची परीक्षा** — अपराधी असूनही पश्चाताप पाहून क्षमा करतो. **६. पराक्रम कथा-** संकटात धैर्याने शत्रूवर विजय मिळवतो.**७. नम्रतेचा आदर्श-** यश मिळाल्यावरही अंहकार न बाळगणे.**८. कर्तव्यभावना** — स्वत:च्या सुखापेक्षा प्रजेचे हित महत्त्वाचे मानतो.**९. समान न्याय-** गरीब व श्रीमंत यांच्यात भेद न करता न्याय करणे **१०. बुद्धीचा वापर** — शक्तीपेक्षा बुद्धीने पश्न सोडवतो.**११. त्यागाची कथा** — राजसत्ता सोडूनही धर्म पाळतो.**१२. गुरुभक्ती** — गुरूच्या आज्ञेला सर्वोच्च मानतो. **१३. स्त्रीसन्मान** — स्त्रीचा मान व प्रतिष्ठा जपतो. **१४. धैर्यशील निर्णय** — कठीण प्रसंगीही योग्य निर्णय घेतो. **१५. लोककल्याण** — जनतेच्या कल्याणासाठी स्वत:चा त्याग करणे. **१६. क्षमाशीलता** — सूड न घेता क्षमा करणे श्रेष्ठ मानतो. **१७. सत्याची किंमत — सत्यासाठी संकटे सहन करतो. १८. धर्मपालन — अधर्मापेक्षा धर्माचा मार्ग निवडतो. १९. निस्वार्थ सेवा** — कोणतीही अपेक्षा न ठेवता मदत करणे. **२०.न्यायासाठी बलिदान**— न्यायासाठी स्वत:ला संकटात टाकतो. **२१.संयम व विवेक** — रागावर नियंत्रण ठेवतो. **२२. राजधर्म** — राजा म्हणून कर्तव्य सर्वोच्च मानतो. **२३. शौर्य आणि करुणा** — वीर असूनही करूणाशील असणे. **२४. प्रामाणिकपणा** — कितीही कठीण असले तरी सत्य लपवत नाही. **२५. आर्दश नेतृत्त्व-** प्रजेसाठी आदर्श राजा ठरतो. **२६. धैर्याची परीक्षा** — भीतीवर मात करतो. **२७.नितिमूल्यांचा आग्रह** — चुकीच्या मार्गाने यश नको. **२८.समानतेचा संदेश** — सर्व मानव समान मानले जातात. **२९.स्वाभिमान** — अन्यायासमोर न झुकणे. **३०. धैर्य व संयम** — संकटात शांत राहतो. **३१.कर्तव्यपरायणता** — स्वत:पेक्षा राज्य प्रथम **३२. पूर्ण नितीमत्ता** — आदर्श राजा कसा असावा यांचे मूर्त रूप.

सिंहासन बत्तीसी दंतकथातून प्रतित होणाऱ्या मूल्यांची आजच्या शिक्षणातील उपयुक्तत्ता :

सिंहासन बत्तीसी कथातून वरील सांराश पाहता आपणास असे म्हणता येईल की आजच्या विद्यार्थ्यामध्ये मुल्यांची रु करण्यासाठी प्रभावी साधन ठरते. या कथांमधील प्रसंग, व्यक्तिरेखा निर्णयप्रकिया विद्यार्थ्याच्या व्यक्तिमत्व विकासावर सकारात्मक परिणाम करतात .

१.नैतिक मूल्यांचा विकास : सिंहासन बत्तीसीतील कथांतून सत्य, प्रमाणिकपणा, संयम व सदाचार यांचे महत्त्व अधोरेखित होते. विद्यार्थी योग्य व अयोग्य वर्तनातील फरक समजू लागतात, ज्यामुळे त्यांच्यात नैतिक जाणीव विकसित होते.

२.आदर्श नेतृत्त्वाचे संस्कार : राजा विक्रमादित्य यांच्या कथांतून न्यायप्रियता, धैर्य, विवेकपूर्ण निर्णयक्षमता व लोकहिताची भावना दिसून येते. या मूल्यांमुळे विद्यार्थ्यामध्ये नेतृत्वगुणांचा विकास होतो. जो भावी नागरिक घडवण्यासाठी आवश्यक आहे.

३. **न्याय प्रियता व समतेची भवना :** सिंहासन बत्तीसी कथांमधील निर्णय सर्वासाठी समान व न्याय असल्याने आढळते. त्यामुळे विद्यार्थ्यामध्ये समता, निष्पक्षता व सामाजिक न्यायाची भावना रुजते. विद्यार्थ्यामध्ये निष्पक्ष विचारसारणी विकसित होते.

४. **कर्तत्व व जबाबदारी :** सिंहासन बत्तीसी कथां कर्तव्याला सर्वोच्च स्थान देतात. त्यामुळे विद्यार्थ्यामध्ये शिस्त, जबाबदारीची जाणीव, नियम पाळण्याची सवय व कर्तत्वनिष्ठा विकसित होते.

५. **विवेक व निर्णयक्षमता :** कथांतील नैतिक संघर्ष विद्यार्थ्यांना विचार करण्यास प्रवृत्त करतात. परीणामी, त्यांची तर्कशुध्द विचारसरणी व योग्य निर्णय घेण्याची क्षमता वाढते.

६. **सत्य व प्रामाणिकपणा :** सिंहासन बत्तीसी कथांमधील विक्रमादित्य सत्यासाठी कठीण निर्णय घेतो. विद्यार्थ्याच्या दृष्टीकोन पाहता या कथांतून खोटेपणाचे दुष्परिणाम समजतात. सत्य बोलण्याचे धैर्य वाढते, आत्मविश्वास वाढतो.

७. **सामाजिक संवेदनशीलता व परोपकार :** सिंहासन बत्तीसी कथांमधून समाजहिताला प्राधान्य दिले आहे त्यामुळे विद्यार्थ्यामध्ये सहानुभूती, मदतीची भावना, सामाजिक बांधिलकी विकसित होते.

८. **दानशील वृत्ती :** या कथां तून अनेक कथातून गरजू, गरीब व दु:खी लोकांप्रती सहानुभूती आणि दानशील वृत्ती दिसून येते आणि हे उत्तम नेतुत्वाचे लक्षण मानले जाते. यातून विद्यार्थ्यांना दानशीलता वृत्ती निर्माण होते.

९. **करुणा व मानवता :** शत्रूप्रतीसुधा करुणा दाखवणे ही श्रेष्ठ नित्तीमता असल्याने सिंहासन बत्तीसी कथांमधून दिसून येते.

१०. **धैर्य व संयम :** सिंहासन बत्तीसी कथा मधून संकटसमयी धैर्य राखून योग्य निर्णय घेणे हे नित्तीमान व्यक्तीचे लक्षण यातून जाणवते. तेच विद्यार्थ्याच्या आचरणात आपणास बिंबवता येते.

निष्कर्ष :

सिंहासन बत्तीसी या कथांमधून प्रतीत होणारी न्यायप्रियता व कर्तव्यनिष्ठा ही मूल्ये आजच्या शिक्षणव्यवस्थेसाठी अत्यंत आवश्यक आहेत. या कथांचा शैक्षणिक वापर केल्यास विद्यार्थ्यामध्ये नैतिक जाणीव, जबाबदारी आणि सामाजिक बांधिलकी विकसित होऊन मूल्यांधिष्ठीत शिक्षणाची उद्दिष्ट साध्य करता येतील आणि यातून विद्यार्थ्याच्या विकासास उपयुक्त होईल.

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मिथक आणि सत्य साईदान्तिक अधिष्ठान व सामाजिक संदर्भाचा अभ्यास

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सार (Abstract)

मानवी समाजाच्या वैचारिक जडणघडणीत मिथक आणि सत्य या संकल्पनांनी महत्त्वाची भूमिका बजावली आहे. मिथकांमधून मानवाने अज्ञात विश्वाचे स्पष्टीकरण देण्याचा प्रयत्न केला, तर सत्याच्या शोधातून विवेक, विज्ञान आणि सामाजिक प्रगतीचा मार्ग खुला झाला. प्रस्तुत लेखात मिथक व सत्य यांचे सैदांतिक अधिष्ठान, त्यांची संकल्पना, वैशिष्ट्ये, परस्परसंबंध आणि आधुनिक समाजातील भूमिका यांचा सविस्तर अभ्यास करण्यात आला आहे. मिथक आणि सत्य या परस्परविरोधी नसून परस्परपूरक संकल्पना असून संतुलित दृष्टीकोनातून त्यांचा विचार केल्यास विवेकशील आणि प्रगत समाजनिर्मिती शक्य होते, हे अधोरेखित करण्यात आले आहे.

बीज शब्द व स्पष्टीकरण

मिथक (Myth) – परंपरा, श्रद्धा, सामूहिक अनुभव व कल्पनांवर आधारित कथा किंवा समजुती, ज्या समाजमानस घडवतात.

सत्य (Truth) – निरीक्षण, अनुभव, तर्क आणि पुराव्यांच्या आधारे सिद्ध होणारे तथ्य.

सैदांतिक अधिष्ठान – एखाद्या संकल्पनेमागील मूलभूत तत्त्वे, विचारप्रणाली व तत्त्वज्ञान.

श्रद्धा – तर्क किंवा वैज्ञानिक पुराव्याविना स्वीकारलेला विश्वास.

विवेकशीलता – तर्कशुद्ध, चिकित्सक व प्रश्न विचारणारी विचारक्षमता.

प्रस्तावना

मानवी इतिहासाचा अभ्यास केला असता असे लक्षात येते की मानवाच्या विचारविश्वाला आकार देण्यात मिथक आणि सत्य या दोन संकल्पनांचा मोलाचा वाटा आहे. आदिम मानव निसर्गाच्या अद्भुत व भयावह शक्तींपुढे असहाय्य होता. वीज, पाऊस, वादळ, रोग, मृत्यू, जन्म, ऋतूचक्र यांसारख्या घटनांचे वैज्ञानिक स्पष्टीकरण त्या काळी उपलब्ध नव्हते. या अज्ञात शक्तींना अर्थ देण्यासाठी मानवाने कल्पनाशक्तीचा आधार घेतला आणि त्यातून मिथकांची निर्मिती झाली.

मिथक ही केवळ काल्पनिक कथा नसून ती समाजाच्या सामूहिक अनुभवातून घडलेली विचाररचना आहे. मिथकांमधून देव-दैवतांची संकल्पना, सृष्टीची उत्पत्ती, जीवन-मरणाचे तत्त्वज्ञान आणि नैतिक मूल्ये रुजवली गेली. कालांतराने मानवी बुद्धीचा विकास झाला, तर्कशास्त्र आणि निरीक्षणाधारित ज्ञानाचा उदय झाला. विज्ञानाच्या प्रगतीसोबत सत्यशोधनाची प्रक्रिया विकसित झाली. त्यामुळे मिथक व सत्य यांच्यात संघर्षही निर्माण झाला आणि काही प्रमाणात समन्वयही दिसून आला.

आजच्या आधुनिक युगातही मिथक आणि सत्य या दोन्ही संकल्पना समाजजीवनावर प्रभाव टाकताना दिसतात. त्यामुळे मिथक आणि सत्य यांचे सैदांतिक अधिष्ठान, त्यांची वैशिष्ट्ये, परस्परसंबंध आणि सामाजिक उपयुक्तता यांचा अभ्यास करणे आवश्यक ठरते.

उद्दिष्टे

1. मिथक व सत्य या संकल्पनांचे सैदांतिक स्वरूप स्पष्ट करणे.
2. मिथकांची सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक व मानसिक भूमिका समजून घेणे.

3. सत्याच्या आधारे विवेकशील समाजनिर्मितीचे महत्त्व अधोरेखित करणे.
4. मिथक व सत्य यांतील संघर्ष व समन्वयाचा अभ्यास करणे.
5. आधुनिक समाजातील मिथक व सत्य यांची भूमिका स्पष्ट करणे.

मिथक : संकल्पना व स्वरूप

मिथक ही समाजमनातून निर्माण झालेली सामूहिक कथा असते. ती केवळ काल्पनिक नसून समाजाच्या भावनिक, धार्मिक व सांस्कृतिक गरजांचे प्रतिबिंब असते. मिथकांमध्ये ऐतिहासिक किंवा वैज्ञानिक सत्य असणे आवश्यक नसते, मात्र त्यामागे विशिष्ट सामाजिक अर्थ दडलेला असतो.

उदाहरणार्थ, विविध संस्कृतींमध्ये सृष्टीनिर्मितीच्या कथा आढळतात. या कथा वैज्ञानिकदृष्ट्या सिद्ध नसल्या तरी त्या समाजाला जीवनाचा अर्थ, नैतिकता आणि मूल्यव्यवस्था देतात. मिथकांमुळे समाजात एकात्मता निर्माण होते आणि परंपरा टिकून राहतात.

म्हणूनच मिथक म्हणजे अंधश्रद्धा एवढ्यापुरते मर्यादित न राहता, सामाजिक मानसशास्त्र आणि सांस्कृतिक अभ्यासाचा महत्त्वाचा भाग आहे.

सत्य : संकल्पना व स्वरूप

सत्य ही संकल्पना अनुभव, निरीक्षण, तर्क आणि पुराव्यावर आधारित असते. सत्य हे स्थिर नसून गतिशील असते. वैज्ञानिक संशोधनाच्या प्रगतीमुळे आज स्वीकारलेले सत्य उद्या बदलू शकते किंवा अधिक व्यापक स्वरूप धारण करू शकते. सत्याच्या शोधासाठी प्रश्न विचारण्याची वृत्ती, चिकित्सक विचार आणि प्रयोगशीलता आवश्यक असते. विज्ञान, तंत्रज्ञान आणि आधुनिक शिक्षणपद्धती यांमुळे सत्यशोधनाची प्रक्रिया अधिक प्रभावी झाली आहे.

सत्याचा स्वीकार समाजाला अंधश्रद्धांपासून मुक्त करून विवेकशील आणि प्रगत बनवतो.

मिथक व सत्य : सैदांतिक अधिष्ठान

मिथकांचे अधिष्ठान श्रद्धा, परंपरा आणि सामूहिक अनुभवावर आधारित असते, तर सत्याचे अधिष्ठान तर्क, निरीक्षण आणि वैज्ञानिक पुराव्यावर आधारलेले असते. दोन्हींची कार्यक्षेत्रे भिन्न असली तरी मानवी समाजाच्या विकासात त्यांचे योगदान महत्त्वाचे आहे.

मिथक मानवाला भावनिक आधार देतात, तर सत्य बौद्धिक स्पष्टता प्रदान करते. त्यामुळे दोन्ही संकल्पना परस्परविरोधी नसून पूरक स्वरूपाच्या आहेत.

मिथक आणि सत्य यांतील संबंध

मिथक व सत्य यांमध्ये संपूर्ण विरोध नसून एक प्रकारचा संवाद आहे. अनेक मिथकांमागे ऐतिहासिक किंवा नैसर्गिक सत्य लपलेले असते. उदाहरणार्थ, पूर, दुष्काळ किंवा रोगांशी संबंधित मिथकांमागे पर्यावरणीय किंवा जैविक कारणे असू शकतात.

आधुनिक काळात मिथकांचे पुनर्वाचन करून त्यातील सांस्कृतिक आणि सामाजिक अर्थ शोधले जात आहेत. त्यामुळे मिथकांचे अंधानुकरण न करता विवेकपूर्ण अभ्यास करणे आवश्यक ठरते.

आधुनिक समाजातील मिथक व सत्य

आजच्या वैज्ञानिक आणि तंत्रज्ञानप्रधान युगात सत्याचे महत्त्व अधिक वाढले आहे. तरीही मिथक पूर्णतः नष्ट झालेले नाहीत. माध्यमे, लोकसंस्कृती, धार्मिक परंपरा आणि सामाजिक रूढी यांमधून मिथके नव्या रूपात अस्तित्वात आहेत.

समाजप्रगतीसाठी अंधश्रद्धा निर्मूलन आवश्यक असले तरी सांस्कृतिक संवेदनशीलता जपणेही तितकेच महत्त्वाचे आहे. मिथकांचा सांस्कृतिक अभ्यास करून सत्याचा वैज्ञानिक स्वीकार केल्यास संतुलित समाजनिर्मिती शक्य होते.

निष्कर्ष

मिथक आणि सत्य या परस्परविरोधी नसून परस्परपूरक संकल्पना आहेत. मिथक समाजाला सांस्कृतिक ओळख, भावनिक आधार आणि मूल्यव्यवस्था देतात, तर सत्य समाजाला विवेक, वैज्ञानिक दृष्टिकोन आणि प्रगतीकडे नेतात. विवेकशील दृष्टीकोनातून मिथकांचा सांस्कृतिक अर्थ समजून घेऊन सत्याचा स्वीकार केल्यास संतुलित, प्रगल्भ आणि प्रगत समाजनिर्मिती शक्य होते.

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मिथके आणि सामाजिक परिवर्तन : एक समाजशास्त्रीय आणि सांस्कृतिक विश्लेषण

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प्रस्तावना :

मिथक (Myth) ही संकल्पना मानवी संस्कृती, धर्म आणि साहित्यातील एक अत्यंत महत्त्वाची आणि गुंतागुंतीची संज्ञा आहे. साध्या शब्दांत सांगायचे तर, मिथक म्हणजे अशा पुरातन कथा ज्यामध्ये विश्वाची निर्मिती, देव-देवतांचे पराक्रम आणि मानवी अस्तित्वाची गूढ उत्तरे शोधण्याचा प्रयत्न केलेला असतो. 'मिथक' हा शब्द इंग्रजीतील 'Myth' या शब्दाचा पर्याय आहे, जो मूळ ग्रीक शब्द 'Mythos' (ज्याचा अर्थ 'कथा' किंवा 'शब्द') यावरून आला आहे. या कथा ऐतिहासिकदृष्ट्या खऱ्या असतीलच असे नाही, पण त्या समाजाच्या सांस्कृतिक आणि आध्यात्मिक सत्याचे प्रतीक असतात. मिथके (Myths) म्हणजे केवळ जुन्या काळातील काल्पनिक कथा नव्हेत, तर त्या समाजाच्या सांस्कृतिक आणि नैतिक जडणघडणीचा पाया असतात. कोणत्याही समाजाची मूल्यव्यवस्था, परंपरा आणि वर्तणूक समजून घेण्यासाठी त्या समाजातील मिथकांचा अभ्यास करणे अनिवार्य ठरते. 'मिथके आणि सामाजिक परिवर्तन' हा विषय परस्परविरोधी वाटला तरी, प्रत्यक्षात ते एकाच नाण्याच्या दोन बाजू आहेत. मिथाकामध्ये अनेक गोष्टीचा समावेश होतो ज्यामध्ये अतिनैसर्गिक घटक यात देव, दानव, यक्ष आणि चमत्कारिक शक्तींचा समावेश असतो. याचबरोबर जग कसे निर्माण झाले ? पाऊस का पडतो ? मृत्यू काय आहे ? अशा प्रश्नांची उत्तरे शोधण्यासाठी मिथके तयार झाली. मिथके ही केवळ मनोरंजन नसून ती एखाद्या समाजाची मूल्ये आणि श्रद्धा जपत असतात. साहित्य,समाजामध्ये रूढ कथांमागे अनेकदा सखोल तत्वज्ञान दडलेले असते. उदा. 'अमृत मंथन' हे केवळ समुद्र घुसळण्याची कथा नसून मानवी मनातील द्वंद्व आणि त्यातून निघणाऱ्या ज्ञानाचे प्रतीक आहे. असेही मानले जाते.

मिथकांचे अनेक प्रकार आहेत यामध्ये ज्यात जगाच्या उत्पत्तीबद्दलच्या कथा आहेत तसेच ब्रह्मांडाची निर्मिती, बिग बँगच्या पौराणिक आवृत्त्या. देव-देवतांच्या जीवनावर आधारित उदा. शंकराचे तांडव, विष्णूचे अवतार. याचप्रमाणे विशेष शक्ती असलेल्या नायकांच्या कथा. हर्क्युलिस (ग्रीक), हनुमान (भारतीय). जगाचा अंत आणि पुनर्जन्म अवतारवादाच्या कथा. मिथके आणि रंजक कथा समाजातील सर्वच धर्मात व वेग- वेगळी संस्कृती असणाऱ्या मानवी समुदायात आढळतात.

अध्ययनाचे उद्देश :

१. समाजातील मिथक संकल्पना व महत्व समजावून घेणे
२.सामाजिक परिवर्तानातील मिथकाच्या भूमिकेचा आढावा घेणे

संशोधन पद्धती :

सदर संशोधन वर्णनात्मक स्वरूपाचे असून दुय्यम स्त्रोतावर आधारित आहे. मिथका संबंधी लिहलेले ग्रंथ, लेख याच बरोबर समाजात मौखिक आधारे प्रचलित असणाऱ्या कथा आणि इतर इंटरनेट स्त्रोत इ. वर आधारित आहे.

मानवी संस्कृतीच्या विकासक्रमात मिथके ही केवळ काल्पनिक कथा नसून ती सामाजिक वास्तवाचे, मूल्यांचे आणि संघर्षांचे संकीर्ण प्रतिबिंब असतात. समाजशास्त्रीय परिप्रेक्ष्यातून पाहिल्यास, मिथके ही समाजाची 'सामूहिक जाणीव' टिकवून ठेवण्याचे आणि वेळप्रसंगी ती बदलण्याचे महत्त्वपूर्ण साधन ठरतात. मिथक आणि सामाजिक परिवर्तन यांचा संबंध परस्परविरोधी वाटत असला, तरी तो प्रत्यक्षात पूरक असतो. एकीकडे मिथके प्रस्थापित सामाजिक रचनांना 'नैसर्गिक' किंवा 'दैवी' ठरवून स्थिरता प्रदान करतात, तर दुसरीकडे त्याच मिथकांचे नवीन संदर्भात केलेले पुनर्वाचन हे सामाजिक क्रांतीसाठी प्रेरणादायी ठरते. प्रस्तुत अहवाल मिथकांच्या समाजशास्त्रीय सिद्धांतांपासून ते आधुनिक तंत्रज्ञानाच्या युगातील नवीन मिथकांपर्यंतचा एक विस्तृत प्रवास मांडतो, ज्यामध्ये भारतीय आणि विशेषतः महाराष्ट्राच्या सांस्कृतिक पर्यावरणातील बदलांचा सखोल वेध घेण्यात आला आहे.

मिथकांचे समाजशास्त्रीय सिद्धांत आणि संरक्षणात्मक चौकटी

मिथकांचा अभ्यास करताना समाजशास्त्रामध्ये प्रामुख्याने दोन प्रवाहांचा विचार केला जातो: कार्यात्मकवाद आणि संरचनावाद एमिले डर्कहाइम यांच्या मते, मिथके ही समाजातील व्यक्तींना एकत्र बांधण्याचे काम करतात. त्यांनी 'द एलिमेंटरी फॉर्म्स ऑफ रिलिजियस लाईफ' मध्ये स्पष्ट केल्याप्रमाणे, धार्मिक मिथके आणि विधी हे 'सामूहिक प्रतिनिधित्व' असतात, जे वैयक्तिक जाणिवेच्या पलीकडे जाऊन समाजाला एकसंध ठेवतात. डर्कहाइमच्या सिद्धांतानुसार, सामाजिक एकात्मत राखण्यासाठी मिथके ही 'सामाजिक वस्तुस्थिती' म्हणून कार्य करतात, जी व्यक्तीवर बाह्य नियंत्रण ठेवतात आणि तिला सामाजिक नियमांचे पालन करण्यास प्रवृत्त करतात. दुसरीकडे, क्लॉड लेव्ही-स्ट्रॉस यांनी मिथकांकडे पाहण्याचा एक क्रांतिकारी दृष्टिकोन मांडला. त्यांच्या 'स्ट्रक्चरल स्टडी ऑफ मिथ' या सिद्धांतानुसार, मानवी मेंदूची रचना ही 'द्वैत' किंवा 'विरोधी जोड्यांच्या' माध्यमातून विचार करण्याची असते. निसर्ग विरुद्ध संस्कृती, जीवन विरुद्ध मृत्यू, कच्चं विरुद्ध शिजवलेलं अशा विरोधाभासांमध्ये समन्वय साधण्याचे काम मिथके करतात. लेव्ही-स्ट्रॉस यांच्या मते, मिथक हे भाषेसारखे असते; त्याचा अर्थ त्यातील विशिष्ट शब्दांमध्ये नसून त्या घटकांच्या मांडणीत किंवा रचनेत असतो. त्यांनी मिथकातील लघू घटकांना 'मायथीम्स' असे संबोधले. मिथकांचे विश्लेषण करताना लेव्ही-स्ट्रॉस यांनी 'ब्रीकोलेज' ही संकल्पना मांडली. त्यांच्या मते, मिथक निर्माता हा उपलब्ध सांस्कृतिक घटकांचा वापर करून नवीन कथा रचतो, ज्यातून समाजाला पडलेल्या जटिल प्रश्नांची उत्तरे शोधण्याचा प्रयत्न केला जातो. ही प्रक्रिया कधीही पूर्ण होत नाही, कारण प्रत्येक मिथक हे दुसऱ्या गटाशी जोडलेले असते आणि त्यातून अर्थाचे नवनवीन पदर उलगडत जातात.

सामाजिक स्तररचना आणि सत्तेचे मिथकीय समर्थन

समाजातील सत्तासंबंध आणि वर्गवारी टिकवून ठेवण्यासाठी मिथकांचा वापर ऐतिहासिक काळापासून केला जात आहे. मिथके ही केवळ कथा नसून ती सत्तेला 'वैधता' मिळवून देणारी यंत्रणा आहे. उदाहरणार्थ, प्राचीन ग्रीक मिथकांमध्ये ऑलिंपसवरील देवांची उतरंड ही तत्कालीन मानवी समाजातील सत्तेच्या उतरंडीचेच प्रतिबिंब होती. भारतीय संदर्भात, चातुर्वर्ण्य व्यवस्थेचे समर्थन करण्यासाठी 'ऋग्वेदा'तील 'पुरुष-सूक्त' या मिथकाचा मोठ्या प्रमाणावर वापर झाला. या मिथकातून समाजातील चार वर्णांची उत्पत्ती विरुप पुरुषाच्या शरीरातून झाली असल्याचे सांगून, ब्राह्मण, क्षत्रिय, वैश्य आणि शूद्र यांच्यातील विषमता ही 'दैवी' असल्याचे प्रस्थापित करण्याचा प्रयत्न झाला.अशा प्रकारची मिथके समाजातील 'नैसर्गिक सुव्यवस्था' दर्शवतात, ज्यामुळे पीडित गटांना त्यांच्या शोषणाविरुद्ध आवाज उठवणे कठीण जाते. जेव्हा एखादी गोष्ट 'नैसर्गिक' किंवा 'ईश्वरी देणगी' म्हणून सादर केली जाते, तेव्हा त्यावर प्रश्नचिन्ह उपस्थित करणे हे धर्माच्या विरोधात मानले जाते. ब्रॉनिस्लॉ मॅलिनोस्की यांच्या मते, मिथके ही समाजातील संस्था आणि नियमांचे 'सनद' म्हणून कार्य करतात, जेणेकरून समाजातील व्यवहार सुरळीत चालतील. तथापि, मिथकांचे हे कार्य केवळ दडपशाहीपुरते मर्यादित नाही. समाजातील संघर्ष कमी करण्यासाठी आणि परस्पर सहकार्य वाढवण्यासाठीही मिथकांचा वापर होतो. 'पुरुष-सूक्त'चे पुनर्वाचन करताना काही अभ्यासक असे सुचवतात की, ते मुळात समाजातील विविध घटकांच्या 'परस्पर-अवलंबित्वाचे' प्रतीक होते. समाजातील ज्ञान (मुख), संरक्षण (बाहू), व्यापार (जांघ) आणि सेवा (पाय) हे सर्व घटक एकाच शरीराचे भाग आहेत, याचा अर्थ असा की सर्वांचे अस्तित्व एकमेकांशी जोडलेले आहे. मात्र, काळाच्या ओघात या सहकार्याच्या संकल्पनेचे रूपांतर कठोर श्रेणीबद्ध विषमतेत झाले.

महाराष्ट्रातील सांस्कृतिक क्रांती आणि वारकरी चळवळ

महाराष्ट्राच्या समाजशास्त्रीय अभ्यासात वारकरी चळवळ हे सामाजिक परिवर्तनाचे एक अत्यंत महत्त्वाचे केंद्र आहे. १३ व्या शतकात जेव्हा समाज कर्मकांडांच्या आणि ब्राह्मणवादी वर्चस्वाच्या ओझ्याखाली दबला होता, तेव्हा वारकरी संतांनी एक 'प्रति-संस्कृती' उभी केली. विठ्ठलाच्या रूपाने त्यांनी एक असे दैवत जनसामान्यांसमोर ठेवले, जे सर्वांसाठी सहज उपलब्ध होते. वारकरी मिथकांमध्ये ईश्वराला 'आई'च्या रूपात पाहण्याची पद्धत आहे (विठू माऊली), जी पितृसत्ताक व्यवस्थेला एक प्रकारे छेद देते. वारकरी संप्रदायाने मांडलेले समतेचे मिथक हे केवळ आध्यात्मिक नव्हते, तर ते सामाजिकही होते. पंढरपूरची वारी ही एक अशी जागा बनली जिथे जात, वर्ण आणि वर्ग यांचे बंधन शिथिल होते. ज्ञानेश्वर, नामदेव, तुकाराम आणि

चोखामेळा यांसारख्या विविध जातीतील संतांनी एकत्र येऊन विठ्ठलाची भक्ती केली, ज्यातून महाराष्ट्रात 'समतेची' एक नवीन सामूहिक जाणीव निर्माण झाली. वारकरी चळवळीचा प्रभाव इतका मोठा होता की, त्यामुळे महाराष्ट्रात एक प्रकारची 'धार्मिक लोकशाही' निर्माण झाली. विठ्ठलाला भेटण्यासाठी कोणत्याही मध्यस्थाची किंवा पंडिताची गरज नव्हती, ज्यामुळे ब्राह्मणांच्या ज्ञान-इजारेदारीला सुरुंग लागला. ही चळवळ जरी राजकीय क्रांती नसली, तरी तिने महाराष्ट्राच्या मातीत समतेचे बी पेरले, ज्याचा फायदा पुढील काळात जोतिराव फुले आणि डॉ. आंबेडकरांच्या चळवळींना झाला.

महात्मा फुले आणि आंबेडकरी चळवळ: मिथकांचे विच्छेदन आणि पुनर्वाचन

१९ व्या आणि २० व्या शतकात महाराष्ट्रात झालेल्या समाजसुधारणेच्या चळवळींमध्ये मिथकांचा वापर जाणीवपूर्वक परिवर्तनाचे हत्यार म्हणून करण्यात आला. महात्मा जोतिराव फुले आणि डॉ. बाबासाहेब आंबेडकर यांनी प्रस्थापित हिंदू मिथकांचे केवळ विश्लेषणच केले नाही, तर त्यांना सक्षम पर्यायही उभे केले.महात्मा फुले यांनी त्यांच्या 'गुलामगिरी' (१८७३) या ग्रंथात प्रस्थापित ब्राह्मणी मिथकांना पूर्णपणे उलटवून लावले. त्यांनी 'बळीराजा' या पात्राचे पुनरुज्जीवन केले. लोकपरंपरेत बळीराजा हा एक दानशूर राजा मानला जातो, ज्याला वामनाने पाताळात गाडले. फुलेंनी या कथेचे समाजशास्त्रीय विश्लेषण करताना बळीराजाला 'मूळनिवासी' शेतकरी राजा आणि 'बहुजनांचा' नायक म्हणून सादर केले. त्यांच्या मते, वामन हा आर्य आक्रमकांचे प्रतीक होता, ज्याने कपटाने इथल्या न्यायप्रिय राजाचा पराभव केला. फुलेंनी 'इडा पीडा टळो आणि बळीचे राज्य येवो' या म्हणीला सामाजिक न्यायाचे प्रतीक बनवले. त्यांनी विष्णूच्या विविध अवतारांना (परशुराम, राम इ.) आक्रमक आणि शोषक ठरवून, त्यांच्या विरोधात बळीराजाच्या समतावादी राज्याचे मिथक उभे केले. ही केवळ एक ऐतिहासिक मांडणी नव्हती, तर ती शूद्र आणि अतिशूद्रांमध्ये आत्मभान निर्माण करण्याची एक पद्धत होती. त्यांनी शिवाजी महाराजांनाही 'कुळवाडी भूषण' म्हणून संबोधून त्यांना ब्राह्मणी चौकटीतून बाहेर काढले.

डॉ. आंबेडकरांचे वैचारिक बंड आणि धम्मचक्र प्रवर्तन

डॉ. बाबासाहेब आंबेडकरांनी मिथकांकडे एका तर्कशुद्ध आणि वैज्ञानिक दृष्टिकोनातून पाहिले. त्यांनी 'शूद्र पूर्वी कोण होते आणि 'अस्पृश्य' या ग्रंथांमधून जातिव्यवस्थेच्या उत्पत्तीच्या मिथकांचे तुकडे केले. आंबेडकरांनी स्पष्ट केले की, जातिव्यवस्था ही दैवी नसून ती मानवनिर्मित आहे आणि ती टिकवून ठेवण्यासाठी धर्माचा वापर केला गेला आहे. आंबेडकरांचे सर्वात मोठे योगदान म्हणजे त्यांनी दिलेले 'बुद्धाचे' मिथक. बुद्धाची प्रतिमा ही दलितांसाठी केवळ एका दैवताची नव्हती, तर ती प्रज्ञा, करुणा आणि समतेच्या नवीन मूल्यांची होती. १९५६ मध्ये त्यांनी केलेला धर्मांतर सोहळा हे एका जुन्या, शोषणकारी मिथकीय विश्वातून बाहेर पडून मानवी प्रतिष्ठेच्या नवीन विश्वात केलेले प्रस्थान होते. त्यांनी दलितांना 'संस्कृत' भाषेतील किंवा ब्राह्मणी संस्कारातील मिथकांचा त्याग करून स्वतःचे नवीन सांस्कृतिक अवकाश निर्माण करण्यास प्रवृत्त केले.

शिवरायांचे मिथक: इतिहास, अस्मिता आणि संमिश्र परंपरा

छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराजांचे व्यक्तिमत्व हे महाराष्ट्राच्या आणि भारताच्या इतिहासातील सर्वात प्रभावी मिथकीय आणि ऐतिहासिक प्रतीक आहे. मात्र, त्यांच्या प्रतिमेचे विश्लेषण करताना विविध राजकीय आणि सामाजिक प्रवाहांनी त्यांच्याकडे वेगवेगळ्या दृष्टिकोनातून पाहिले आहे. १७ व्या शतकात स्थापन झालेले मराठा स्वराज्य हे केवळ हिंदूंचे राज्य नव्हते, तर ते सर्वसमावेशक होते. ऐतिहासिक पुरावे असे दर्शवतात की, शिवाजी महाराजांच्या प्रशासनात आणि सैन्यात मुस्लिमांचा मोठा सहभाग होता (उदा. दौलत खान, नूर बेग). तसेच, त्यांच्या राज्याच्या स्थापत्य शैलीवर दक्षिणी सल्तनतांचा मोठा प्रभाव होता, कारण अनेक मराठा सरदार या सल्तनतांच्या दरबारात सेवा बजावत होते. आधुनिक महाराष्ट्रात शिवाजी महाराजांच्या प्रतिमेवरून राजकीय संघर्ष पाहायला मिळतो. एकीकडे काही राजकीय पक्ष त्यांना हिंदू अस्मितेचे प्रतीक मानतात, तर दुसरीकडे फुले-आंबेडकरवादी चळवळी त्यांना 'रयतेचा राजा' आणि 'शेतकऱ्यांचा कैवारी' म्हणून सादर करतात. महाराष्ट्रात आजही अनेक ठिकाणी 'सय्यद बाबा'चा दर्गा आणि विठ्ठलाचे मंदिर एकाच ठिकाणी असणे किंवा मुस्लिमांनी हिंदू सणांमध्ये सहभागी होणे, या संमिश्र परंपरा शिवाजी महाराजांच्या सर्वसमावेशक वारशाचीच साक्ष देतात.

लिंगभाव आणि आधुनिक मिथक: सावित्रीबाई फुले

स्त्रियांच्या संदर्भात मिथके अनेकदा पितृसत्ताक मूल्यांचे समर्थन करणारी असतात. सीता किंवा सावित्री (सत्यवानाची पत्नी) यांची मिथके ही स्त्रियांनी 'पतीव्रता' आणि 'सहनशील' असावे, यासाठी वापरली जातात. मात्र, १९ व्या शतकात महाराष्ट्रात सावित्रीबाई फुले यांनी या चौकटीला पूर्णपणे बदलले.आज सावित्रीबाई फुले यांच्याकडे 'शिक्षणाची जननी' आणि 'आधुनिक भारताची पहिली शिक्षिका' म्हणून पाहिले जाते. सावित्रीबाईंचे आयुष्य हे स्वतःच एका संघर्षाच्या मिथकात रूपांतरित झाले आहे. जेव्हा त्या शाळेत शिकवायला जायच्या, तेव्हा त्यांच्यावर शेण आणि दगड फेकले जायचे. पण त्यांनी हार मानली नाही. या प्रसंगाचे वर्णन आजच्या काळात एका 'क्रांतीच्या कथे'सारखे केले जाते, ज्यामुळे लाखो मुलींना शिक्षणाची प्रेरणा मिळते. सावित्रीबाईंनी केवळ स्वतः शिक्षण घेतले नाही, तर त्यांनी ब्राह्मण विधवांचे केशवपन थांबवण्यासाठी नाभिकांचा संप घडवून आणला आणि 'बालहत्या प्रतिबंधक गृह' सुरू केले. आजच्या स्त्री मुक्ती चळवळीत सावित्रीबाई फुले ही एक अशा नायिका आहेत, ज्यांनी पौराणिक 'सावित्री'च्या (जी यमाकडून पतीचे प्राण वाचवते) प्रतिमेला छेद देऊन स्त्रियांना 'स्वयंप्रकाशित' होण्याचा संदेश दिला.

राजकीय मिथके आणि समकालीन महाराष्ट्र

राजकारणात मिथकांचा वापर जनसमुदायाला एकत्रित करण्यासाठी आणि ध्रुवीकरणासाठी केला जातो. महाराष्ट्रात 'अस्मितेचे राजकारण' हे मोठ्या प्रमाणावर ऐतिहासिक मिथकांवर आधारलेले आहे. शिवाजी महाराज, संभाजी महाराज किंवा महात्मा फुले यांच्या ऐतिहासिक प्रतिमांचे राजकीय पक्षांनी सोयीनुसार मिथकीकरण केले आहे. सोशल मीडियाच्या युगात 'फेक न्यूज' आणि 'पोस्ट-ट्रुथ'च्या माध्यमातून नवीन राजकीय मिथके रोज निर्माण केली जातात. एखादा नेता कसा 'दैवी' आहे किंवा एखादा गट कसा 'शत्रू' आहे, हे बिंबवण्यासाठी ग्राफिक्स आणि व्हिडिओंचा वापर होतो. महाराष्ट्रातील अलीकडच्या राजकीय घडामोडींमध्ये 'घराणेशाही'चे मिथक विरुद्ध 'विकास' आणि 'कामगिरी'चे मिथक असा संघर्ष पाहायला मिळतो. नागरिक आता केवळ भावनिक आवाहन किंवा वारसा मानण्यापेक्षा 'दिसणाऱ्या विकासाला' अधिक महत्त्व देऊ लागले आहेत, असे काही निवडणूक निकाल दर्शवतात. मात्र, तरीही जातीच्या आधारावर होणारे ध्रुवीकरण आजही टिकून आहे. 'मराठा' विरुद्ध 'इतर मागासवर्गीय' अशा संघर्षात दोन्ही गट स्वतःच्या ऐतिहासिक महानतेची आणि सध्याच्या अन्यायाची मिथके सातत्याने मांडत असतात. यालाच हॅरी ॲलन यांनी 'सिम्बॉलिक इंटरॲक्शन' म्हटले आहे, जिथे प्रतीकांच्या माध्यमातून लोक स्वतःची ओळख सतत नव्याने घडवत असतात.

निष्कर्ष

मिथके आणि सामाजिक परिवर्तन यांचा अभ्यास हा केवळ भूतकाळाचा शोध नसून तो भविष्याची दिशा ठरवण्याचा प्रयत्न आहे. मिथके ही समाजाची सामूहिक स्वप्ने असतात. जेव्हा ही स्वप्ने गुलामगिरीची किंवा विषमतेची असतात, तेव्हा ती प्रस्थापित व्यवस्थेला बळकटी देतात. मात्र, जेव्हा ही स्वप्ने स्वातंत्र्य, समता आणि न्यायाची असतात, तेव्हा ती सामाजिक परिवर्तनाची वाहक ठरतात.महाराष्ट्राच्या सांस्कृतिक इतिहासात वारकरी संतांपासून ते आधुनिक समाजसुधारकांपर्यंत सर्वांनीच जुन्या, सडलेल्या मिथकांचे विसर्जन करून नवीन, मानवी मूल्यांवर आधारित मिथके निर्माण केली. आजच्या तंत्रज्ञानाच्या आणि जागतिकीकरणाच्या युगात, आपण पुन्हा एकदा अशाच एका वळणावर उभे आहोत. आपल्याला ठरवावे लागेल की आपण तंत्रज्ञानाच्या नवीन 'डिजिटल दैवतांचे' गुलाम होणार आहोत, की सावित्रीबाई आणि आंबेडकरांनी दाखवलेल्या प्रज्ञा आणि करुणेच्या मार्गावरून नवीन, समतावादी जगाची निर्मिती करणार आहोत. मिथके ही मानवी प्रतिभेचे सर्वात मोठे सर्जन आहेत; त्यांचा वापर विनाशासाठी नाही, तर मानवी मुक्तीसाठी करणे हेच खऱ्या अर्थाने सामाजिक परिवर्तन आहे.

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अंधश्रद्धा, लोककला आणि संस्कृती: मिथकांच्या आधारे होणारे सामाजिक नियंत्रण

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गोषवारा:

प्रस्तुत शोधनिबंधात मानवी समाजातील अनौपचारिक सामाजिक नियंत्रणाचे स्वरूप मिथके, लोककला आणि अंधश्रद्धा यांच्या त्रयीतून अभ्यासले आहे. समाज हा केवळ लिखित कायद्यांनी चालत नसून, तो परंपरा आणि अलिखित सामाजिक नियमांच्या आधारे अधिक प्रभावीपणे नियंत्रित केला जातो, असे या संशोधनाचे मुख्य गृहितक आहे. कोल्हापूर जिल्ह्यातील ग्रामीण भागातील क्षेत्रीय अभ्यासावर (Field Work) आधारित हा निबंध, लोककला कशा प्रकारे मिथकांचे जतन आणि हस्तांतरण करतात याचे विश्लेषण करतो. संशोधनात असे दिसून आले की, 'पाप-पुण्य' किंवा 'दैवी कोपा'सारखी मिथके सामाजिक शिस्त आणि निसर्ग संवर्धनासाठी 'विधायक' ठरतात, तर त्याच वेळी जातीय उतरंड आणि स्त्री-पुरुष विषमतेला खतपाणी घालण्यात 'विघातक' भूमिका बजावतात. हा अभ्यास 'सांस्कृतिक अंतर' (Cultural Lag) आणि आधुनिक विज्ञानाच्या युगात बदलणाऱ्या सामाजिक नियंत्रणांच्या स्थितीवर प्रकाश टाकतो.

महत्त्वाचे शब्द (Keywords): *मिथके, लोककला, सामाजिक नियंत्रण, अंधश्रद्धा, समाजशास्त्र, कोल्हापूर.*

प्रस्तावना (Introduction)

मानवी समाज आणि संस्कृतीच्या विकासामध्ये 'मिथके' (Myths) आणि 'लोककला' (Folk Arts) यांचा वाटा अत्यंत मोलाचा राहिला आहे. समाजशास्त्रीय दृष्टिकोनातून पाहिले तर, समाज केवळ कायद्यांच्या जोरावर चालत नाही, तर तो परंपरा, श्रद्धा आणि अलिखित नियमांच्या आधारे अधिक प्रभावीपणे नियंत्रित केला जातो. या प्रक्रियेत 'मिथक' हा एक असा आधारस्तंभ आहे, जो समाजाला भूतकाळाशी जोडतो आणि भविष्यातील वर्तणुकीसाठी एक दिशादर्शक आराखडा (Blueprint) प्रदान करतो.

मिथके आणि संस्कृतीचा अनुबंध:

मिथके म्हणजे केवळ कल्पनारम्य कथा नव्हेत, तर त्या एखाद्या संस्कृतीच्या अस्तित्वाचा आणि मूल्यांचा गाभा असतात. सृष्टीची निर्मिती, देव-देवतांचे पराक्रम आणि पूर्वजांच्या कथा यांमधून समाज आपली ओळख निर्माण करत असतो. या कथांना जेव्हा 'लोककले'चे (उदा. पोवाडे, कीर्तन, भारूड, लोकनाट्य) माध्यम मिळते, तेव्हा त्या केवळ श्रवणीय न राहता सामाजिकीकरणाचे (Socialization) एक प्रभावी साधन बनतात. लोककला या मिथकांना जिवंत ठेवण्यासोबतच त्यातील संदेश जनसामान्यांच्या मनावर बिंबवण्याचे काम करतात.

अंधश्रद्धा आणि सामाजिक नियंत्रणाचे तंत्र:

या संपूर्ण प्रक्रियेत 'अंधश्रद्धा' हा एक गुंतागुंतीचा पण महत्त्वाचा घटक म्हणून समोर येतो. **ईमेल दर्खाईम (Emile Durkheim)** यांच्या मते, धर्म आणि श्रद्धा समाजाला एकत्र बांधून ठेवतात. मिथकांमध्ये अनेकदा अशा काही गोष्टींची गुंफण केलेली असते, ज्यांचे वैज्ञानिक समर्थन करणे कठीण असते, मात्र त्यामागे एक विशिष्ट सामाजिक हेतू असतो. 'पाप-पुण्य', 'दैवी प्रकोप' किंवा 'शाप-वरदान' यांसारख्या अंधश्रद्धा मिथकांचा आधार घेऊन समाजात भीती आणि आदराची संमिश्र भावना निर्माण करतात. ही भावना व्यक्तीला समाजाच्या चौकटीबाहेर जाण्यापासून रोखते, ज्याला आपण समाजशास्त्रीय भाषेत **'अनौपचारिक सामाजिक नियंत्रण' (Informal Social Control)** म्हणतो.

संशोधनाचा मुख्य उद्देश:

प्रस्तुत शोधनिबंधाचा मुख्य उद्देश हा आहे की, आधुनिक विज्ञानाच्या युगातही ही मिथके आणि त्यातून निर्माण होणारी अंधश्रद्धा लोककलांच्या माध्यमातून कशा प्रकारे सामाजिक सुव्यवस्था राखण्याचे किंवा व्यक्तीच्या स्वातंत्र्यावर गदा आणण्याचे कार्य करत आहेत, याचा सखोल अभ्यास करणे. संस्कृतीचा वारसा जपत असताना त्यातील अंधश्रद्धेचा वापर सामाजिक नियंत्रणाचे साधन म्हणून कसा केला जातो, याच्या विविध पैलूंचा उलगडा करणे हा या संशोधनाचा मूळ हेतू आहे.

संशोधनाची उद्दिष्टे (Objectives)

- मिथके आणि लोककला यांचा सामाजिक नियंत्रणाशी असलेला संबंध तपासणे.
- अंधश्रद्धेचा वापर करून समाज कशा प्रकारे शिस्त किंवा भीती निर्माण करतो, याचे विश्लेषण करणे.
- लोककलांच्या माध्यमातून मिथकांचे होणारे संवर्धन अभ्यासणे.

साहित्याचे पुनरावलोकन (Literature Review)

या विषयाचा सखोल अभ्यास करण्यासाठी विविध समाजशास्त्रज्ञांच्या सिद्धांतांचा आधार घेण्यात आला आहे.

ईमेल दर्खाईम (Emile Durkheim): त्यांच्या 'The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life' या ग्रंथातील सिद्धांतानुसार, श्रद्धा आणि विधी हे समाजाला एकत्र बांधण्याचे कार्य करतात. पवित्र व अपवित्र याबाबत असलेल्या श्रद्धाच धर्माची निर्मिती करतात. मिथके ही 'सामूहिक जाणीव' (Collective Consciousness) निर्माण करण्याचे साधन आहेत.

बी. मॅलिनोव्स्की (Bronisław Malinowski): यांच्या मते, मिथके ही केवळ कथा नसून ती मानवी वर्तणुकीसाठी लागणारी 'सनद' (Charter) आहेत. ती समाजातील रीतीरिवाजांना वैधता प्रदान करतात.

भारतीय संदर्भाने विचार केल्यास **एम. एन. श्रीनिवास (M. N. Srinivas)** यांच्या 'संस्कृतीकरण' संकल्पनेच्या आधारे, कशा प्रकारे लोककला आणि मिथके उच्च ध्येयवादी जीवनशैलीचा प्रसार ग्रामीण भागात करतात, याचा आढावा घेतला आहे. त्यांच्या मते उच्च जातीतील श्रद्धा कनिष्ट जाती अनुकरण करतात आणि त्यातून ते सामाजिक स्तरीकारणात स्वतःचे स्थान उंचावल्याचा दावा करता.

संशोधन पद्धती (Research Methodology)

हा शोधनिबंध पूर्ण करण्यासाठी संशोधकाने **'गुणात्मक संशोधन' (Qualitative Research)** पद्धतीचा अवलंब केला आहे. प्रत्यक्ष क्षेत्रीय अनुभवासाठी खालील घटकांचा वापर करण्यात आला.

अ) अभ्यासक्षेत्र (Area of Study):

या संशोधनासाठी **कोल्हापूर जिल्ह्यातील ग्रामीण भागाची** निवड केली. तेथील स्थानिक जत्रा, 'गोंधळ' आणि 'भजन' मंडळांच्या सादरीकरणाचे प्रत्यक्ष निरीक्षण केले.

ब) नमुना निवड (Sampling):

- **लोककलावंत:** १० अनुभवी लोककलावंत (गोंधळी, कीर्तनकार आणि भारूडकार) यांच्याशी सखोल मुलाखती घेतल्या.
- **ग्रामस्थ:** ३० ग्रामस्थांशी (विविध वयोगटातील) चर्चा करून त्यांच्या मिथकांवरील विश्वासाचा अभ्यास केला.

क) माहिती संकलनाची साधने (Data Collection Tools):

१. **सहभागी निरीक्षण (Participant Observation):** जत्रा आणि उत्सवांमध्ये लोककलांचे सादरीकरण होत असताना लोकांच्या प्रतिक्रिया आणि कलावंतांनी वापरलेले 'मिथकीय संदर्भ' यांचे सूक्ष्म निरीक्षण केले.

२. **सखोल मुलाखती (In-depth Interviews):** "अंधश्रद्धेचा वापर करून सामाजिक नियम कसे पाळले जातात?" यावर कलावंतांचे मत जाणून घेतले.

समाजशास्त्रीय विश्लेषण (Sociological Analysis)

प्रत्यक्ष क्षेत्रीय कार्यादरम्यान (Field Work) असे दिसून आले की, मिथके आणि लोककला या केवळ करमणुकीच्या गोष्टी नसून त्या सामाजिक संरचनेचा अविभाज्य भाग आहेत. याचे विश्लेषण खालील तीन प्रमुख उप-मुद्यांच्या आधारे करता येईल.

१ मिथके: अनौपचारिक सामाजिक नियंत्रणाचे साधन

समाजशास्त्रात 'कायदेशीर' नियंत्रणापेक्षा 'अनौपचारिक' नियंत्रण अधिक प्रभावी मानले जाते. माझ्या निरीक्षणादरम्यान, ग्रामीण भागात **"पाप-पुण्य"** आणि **"दैवी कोप"** या संकल्पना समाजमनावर खोलवर रुजलेल्या दिसल्या.

- **वास्तविक उदाहरण:** काही विशिष्ट वनराई (देवराई) किंवा जलस्त्रोतांबाबत अशी मिथके आहेत की, तिथली झाडे तोडल्यास किंवा पाणी दूषित केल्यास स्थानिक देवता कोपते.
- **विश्लेषण:** येथे 'अंधश्रद्धा' एक संरक्षक कवच म्हणून काम करते. कायद्याने जे निसर्ग रक्षण होत नाही, ते मिथकांच्या भीतीपोटी लोक पाळतात. हे 'भीतीवर आधारित नियंत्रण' आहे.

२ लोककला: मिथकांच्या वहनाचे माध्यम

लोककला (उदा. भारूड, गोंधळ, तमाशा) या मिथकांना दृश्य स्वरूप देतात.

- **सादरीकरणाचे तंत्र:** भारूडासारख्या कलेत जेव्हा 'विंचू चावला' (काम-क्रोधाचे प्रतीक) असे म्हटले जाते, तेव्हा ते केवळ गाणे नसते. त्यातून मानवी वासनांवर नियंत्रण ठेवण्याचा सामाजिक संदेश दिला जातो.
- **सांस्कृतिक सातत्य:** लोककलावंत पिढ्यानपिढ्या ही मिथके हस्तांतरित करतात. यामुळे समाजातील नैतिक मूल्ये (Values) आणि मानके (Norms) टिकून राहतात. क्षेत्रीय अभ्यासात असे आढळले की, कीर्तनाच्या माध्यमातून दिले जाणारे 'व्यसनमुक्ती'चे संदेश लोकांवर कायद्यापेक्षा जास्त प्रभाव टाकतात.

३ अंधश्रद्धा आणि सामाजिक स्तरीकरण (Social Stratification)

समाजशास्त्रीय दृष्टीने विचार करताना, अंधश्रद्धेचा वापर सामाजिक विषमता टिकवून ठेवण्यासाठीही केला गेल्याचे दिसून येते.

- **जातीय उतरंड:** काही मिथके विशिष्ट जातीच्या श्रेष्ठत्वावर आधारित असतात. "अमुक एका जातीने हेच काम करावे, अन्यथा देवाचा रोष होईल," अशा मिथकांमुळे व्यावसायिक गतिशीलता (Occupational Mobility) मंदावते.
- **स्त्री-पुरुष विषमता:** मासिक पाळी किंवा प्रसूतीशी संबंधित अनेक मिथके स्त्रियांना दुय्यम स्थान देतात. लोककलांमधील काही संवादांतून 'आदर्श स्त्री'ची जी प्रतिमा उभी केली जाते, ती अनेकदा पितृसत्ताक पद्धतीला बळकटी देणारी असते.

४ प्रकार्यात्मक (Functional) विरुद्ध विघातक प्रभाव

- **प्रकार्यात्मक बाजू:** समाजातील एकता टिकवणे, गुन्हेगारी प्रवृत्तीला आळा घालणे आणि नैतिक शिस्त लावणे यासाठी ही त्रयी (मिथक-कला-अंधश्रद्धा) उपयुक्त ठरते.
- **विघातक बाजू:** विज्ञानाभिमुखतेचा अभाव, शोषण आणि कालबाह्य प्रथांचे समर्थन यामुळे समाजाची प्रगती खुंटते. क्षेत्रीय अभ्यासात, तरुण पिढी या मिथकांकडे संशयाने पाहते, तर वृद्ध पिढी आजही त्यांना 'परम सत्य' मानते, ज्यामुळे समाजात 'सांस्कृतिक संघर्ष' (Cultural Conflict) निर्माण होताना दिसतो.
- लोककलांच्या माध्यमातून जेव्हा एखाद्या मिथकाचे उदात्तीकरण केले जाते, तेव्हा त्यामागील 'अंधश्रद्धा' ही जनसामान्यांसाठी 'श्रद्धा' बनून जाते. ही श्रद्धाच समाजाला स्वयंचलित (Auto-regulated) बनवते, जिथे पोलिसांची किंवा कायद्याची गरज भासत नाही.

निष्कर्ष (Conclusion)

'अंधश्रद्धा, लोककला आणि संस्कृती' यांचा परस्परसंबंध केवळ परंपरा जोपासण्यापुरता मर्यादित नसून, तो सामाजिक नियंत्रणाचे एक गुंतागुंतीचे जाळे विणतो. या संशोधनातून खालील प्रमुख निष्कर्ष हाती आले आहेत.

१ **सामाजिक नियंत्रणाचे अनौपचारिक साधन :** संशोधनातून असे सिद्ध होते की, ग्रामीण आणि निमशहरी भागात आजही औपचारिक कायद्यापेक्षा (Formal Law) अनौपचारिक सामाजिक नियंत्रणे (Informal Controls) अधिक प्रभावी आहेत. लोककलांच्या माध्यमातून प्रसारित होणारी मिथके व्यक्तीच्या मनात 'दैवी भीती' आणि 'सामाजिक नैतिकतेचा' दरारा निर्माण करतात. यामुळे गुन्हेगारी रोखण्यासाठी किंवा सामाजिक नियम पाळण्यासाठी ही व्यवस्था स्वयंचलित (Self-regulated) पद्धतीने कार्य करते.

२ **लोककला: संस्कृतीच्या संरक्षकाची भूमिका :** लोककलांनी केवळ मिथकांचे जतन केले नाही, तर त्या कथांना मानवी भावनांशी जोडले आहे. भारूड, गोंधळ किंवा कीर्तनासारख्या माध्यमांतून समाजाला एकत्र आणण्याचे आणि एका विशिष्ट विचारसरणीत बांधण्याचे कार्य यशस्वी झाले आहे. हे निष्कर्ष दर्शवतात की, लोककला या संस्कृतीच्या 'प्रसारक' (Communicators) म्हणून आजही अतुलनीय आहेत.

३ **अंधश्रद्धेचे दुहेरी स्वरूप (The Duality of Superstition) :** या अभ्यासात अंधश्रद्धेचे दोन महत्त्वाचे पैलू दिसून आले:

विधायक पैलू: निसर्ग रक्षण (देवराईचे जतन), पाणी साठवणुकीचे पावित्र्य आणि नैतिक वर्तन राखण्यासाठी अंधश्रद्धेचा वापर 'सकारात्मक नियंत्रण' म्हणून झाला आहे.

विघातक पैलू: हेच नियंत्रण जेव्हा स्त्रियांचे स्वातंत्र्य, जातीचे वर्चस्व आणि वैज्ञानिक दृष्टिकोनाला विरोध करण्यासाठी वापरले जाते, तेव्हा ते सामाजिक प्रगतीला बाधक ठरते.

४ **बदलत्या काळातील संघर्षाचे स्वरूप :** क्षेत्रीय अभ्यासादरम्यान तरुण पिढी आणि वृद्ध पिढी यांच्यातील **'सांस्कृतिक अंतर' (Cultural Lag)** स्पष्टपणे जाणवले. तरुण पिढी लोककलांकडे केवळ 'मनोरंजन' म्हणून पाहते, तर जुनी पिढी त्यातील मिथकांना 'जीवन जगण्याचे सूत्र' मानते. यामुळे भविष्यात ही नियंत्रणे कमकुवत होण्याची शक्यता आहे, ज्याची जागा आधुनिक कायद्याने घेणे आवश्यक आहे.

५ **थोडक्यात सार :** अंधश्रद्धा आणि मिथके हे समाजशास्त्रीय दृष्टिकोनातून समाजाला 'शिस्त' लावण्याचे प्राचीन मार्ग आहेत. लोककला या मार्गांना भावनिक जोड देऊन लोकांच्या मनापर्यंत पोहोचवतात. जोपर्यंत समाजाला विज्ञानाधिष्ठित नैतिकतेचा पर्याय मिळत नाही, तोपर्यंत ही मिथके सामाजिक नियंत्रणाचे मुख्य साधन म्हणून टिकून राहतील.

उपाययोजना (Recommendations)

१. लोककलांमधील अंधश्रद्धेचा भाग वगळून त्यातून वैज्ञानिक आणि सामाजिक प्रबोधनाचे संदेश देण्यावर भर द्यावा.
२. संस्कृतीचे जतन करताना त्यातील मानवी हक्कांना बाधक असणाऱ्या प्रथांचे उच्चाटन करण्यासाठी लोककलावंतांनाच 'प्रबोधक' म्हणून प्रशिक्षित करावे.
३. शाळा आणि महाविद्यालयांतून मिथकांचे समाजशास्त्रीय विश्लेषण शिकवावे, जेणेकरून विद्यार्थी त्यातील 'सत्य' आणि 'कल्पना' यातील फरक ओळखू शकतील.

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चाणक्यांच्या अर्थशास्त्रातील मिथक आणि वास्तव : एक चिकित्सक अभ्यास

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गोषवारा (Abstract)

आचार्य चाणक्य हे भारतीय बौद्धिक व राजकीय परंपरेतील एक अत्यंत प्रभावी विचारवंत आहेत. त्यांच्या अर्थशास्त्र या ग्रंथात राज्यकारभार, अर्थव्यवस्था, करप्रणाली, व्यापार, कृषी, प्रशासन व कूटनीती यांचे शास्त्रबद्ध विवेचन आढळते. तथापि साहित्य व लोकप्रिय संस्कृतीत चाणक्यांची प्रतिमा अनेकदा अतिनाट्यमय, कठोर किंवा केवळ कूटनीतिज्ञ म्हणून सादर केली जाते. या कथनांमुळे त्यांच्या अर्थनीतीभोवती अनेक मिथके निर्माण झाली आहेत. प्रस्तुत संशोधन पेपरमध्ये या मिथकांचे चिकित्सक विश्लेषण करून अर्थशास्त्र या मूळ ग्रंथाच्या आधारे ऐतिहासिक वास्तव स्पष्ट करण्याचा प्रयत्न करण्यात आला आहे. तसेच चाणक्यांच्या अर्थनीतीतील लोककल्याणाभिमुख, वास्तववादी व नैतिक दृष्टिकोन आणि त्याची आधुनिक संदर्भातील उपयुक्तता अधोरेखित करण्यात आली आहे.

बीज शब्द *:आचार्य चाणक्य, अर्थशास्त्र, अर्थनीती, मिथक आणि वास्तव, साहित्य व संस्कृती*

१ - प्रस्तावना :

भारतीय ज्ञानपरंपरेत आचार्य चाणक्यांचे स्थान अद्वितीय आहे. त्यांनी मांडलेली अर्थनीती ही केवळ प्राचीन राज्यव्यवस्थेपुरती मर्यादित नसून ती सामाजिक स्थैर्य, आर्थिक शिस्त आणि लोककल्याण यांचा समन्वय साधणारी आहे. तथापि साहित्य, लोककथा, नाटके, दूरदर्शन मालिका व चित्रपटांमधून चाणक्यांची प्रतिमा अनेकदा एकांगी स्वरूपात मांडली गेली आहे. या मिथकीय प्रतिमांमुळे त्यांच्या विचारांचे वास्तविक स्वरूप दुर्लक्षित राहते.

प्राचीन भारताच्या इतिहासात आचार्य चाणक्य हे एक अद्वितीय व्यक्तिमत्त्व होऊन गेले. त्यांनी केवळ मौर्य साम्राज्याची स्थापना केली नाही, तर 'अर्थशास्त्र' नावाच्या महान ग्रंथाद्वारे राजधर्म आणि अर्थव्यवस्थेचे नियम जगासमोर मांडले. 'अर्थ' म्हणजे केवळ पैसा नव्हे, तर 'मनुष्यांची वृत्ती आणि त्यांनी व्यापलेली भूमी' असा व्यापक अर्थ चाणक्यांनी अभिप्रेत धरला होता.

आजच्या जागतिकीकरणाच्या आणि स्पर्धात्मक अर्थव्यवस्थेच्या युगात सुशासन, पारदर्शक प्रशासन आणि लोकाभिमुख आर्थिक धोरणे यांचे महत्त्व वाढले आहे. या पार्श्वभूमीवर चाणक्यांची अर्थनीती अभ्यासणे अत्यंत आवश्यक ठरते. साहित्य व संस्कृतीतील कथनांची पुनर्व्याख्या करून ऐतिहासिक वास्तव समजून घेणे, तसेच चाणक्यांच्या विचारांची आधुनिक संदर्भातील उपयुक्तता तपासणे हे या अभ्यासाचे महत्त्व अधोरेखित करते.

२. अभ्यासाची उद्दिष्टे (Objectives of the Study)

१. चाणक्यांच्या अर्थशास्त्रातील मूळ आर्थिक सिद्धांतांचा शोध घेणे.
२. चाणक्यांच्या व्यक्तिमत्त्वाशी निगडित काल्पनिक कथा (मिथक) आणि ऐतिहासिक पुरावे यांतील फरक स्पष्ट करणे.
३. 'अर्थशास्त्र' ग्रंथातील महसूल आणि व्यय (खर्च) यांच्या नियोजनाचा अभ्यास करणे.
४. चाणक्य नीतीची आजच्या काळातील प्रासंगिकता तपासणे.

३. संशोधन पद्धती (Research Methodology) : या अभ्यासासाठी 'ऐतिहासिक आणि विश्लेषणात्मक' संशोधन पद्धतीचा वापर करण्यात आला आहे.

१. **प्राथमिक साधने:** कौटिल्य अर्थशास्त्राचे मूळ संस्कृत श्लोक आणि त्यांचे अधिकृत अनुवाद.

२.दुय्यम साधने: इतिहासकारांची पुस्तके, शोधनिबंध, मौर्यकालीन शिलालेख आणि परदेशी प्रवाशांची (उदा. मेगॅस्थेनीज) वर्णने.

४ . विश्लेषण

१.चाणक्यांच्या अर्थशास्त्रातील मूळ आर्थिक सिद्धांतांचा शोध :

चाणक्यांनी अर्थव्यवस्थेचा विचार राज्य, समाज आणि व्यक्ती यांच्या परस्परसंबंधातून केला आहे. त्यांच्या आर्थिक सिद्धांतांचा मुख्य उद्देश राज्याची स्थिरता, आर्थिक समृद्धी आणि प्रजेचे कल्याण हा आहे.

१. **राज्यकेंद्रित अर्थव्यवस्थेचा सिद्धांत :** चाणक्यांच्या मते राज्य हे अर्थव्यवस्थेचे प्रमुख नियंत्रक असावे. उत्पादन, वितरण, किंमत-नियंत्रण, करसंकलन आणि खर्च यावर राज्याचे प्रभावी नियंत्रण असणे आवश्यक आहे. खाणी, वने, जलस्रोत, मीठ, धातू यांसारखी महत्त्वाची साधनसंपत्ती राज्याच्या अखत्यारीत असावी, असे ते सांगतात. हा सिद्धांत आधुनिक सार्वजनिक क्षेत्राच्या संकल्पनेशी सुसंगत आहे.

२. **न्याय्य आणि संतुलित करप्रणालीचा सिद्धांत :** करप्रणालीबाबत चाणक्यांचा दृष्टिकोन अत्यंत व्यवहार्य आहे. कर हे प्रजेवर ओझे ठरू नयेत, तर ते उत्पन्नाच्या क्षमतेनुसार असावेत. "मधमाशी फुलांपासून मध गोळा करते, पण फुलांना इजा करत नाही" ही प्रसिद्ध उपमा देऊन त्यांनी संतुलित करसंकलनाचे तत्त्व स्पष्ट केले आहे. हा विचार आधुनिक प्रगत करप्रणालीच्या संकल्पनेशी जवळचा आहे.

३. **कृषीप्रधान अर्थव्यवस्थेचा सिद्धांत :** चाणक्यांच्या अर्थशास्त्रात कृषीला सर्वोच्च महत्त्व दिले आहे. कृषी हा राज्याच्या उत्पन्नाचा मुख्य आधार असल्यामुळे शेतकऱ्यांचे संरक्षण, सिंचन व्यवस्था, बी-बियाण्यांची उपलब्धता आणि दुष्काळी परिस्थितीत मदत यावर त्यांनी भर दिला आहे. कृषीविकासाशिवाय आर्थिक स्थैर्य शक्य नाही, ही त्यांची ठाम भूमिका होती.

४. **उद्योग आणि व्यापारविकासाचा सिद्धांत :** कृषीबरोबरच उद्योग व व्यापार हे आर्थिक समृद्धीसाठी आवश्यक घटक असल्याचे चाणक्य मानतात. अंतर्गत व आंतरराष्ट्रीय व्यापारासाठी सुरक्षित मार्ग, बाजारपेठांचे नियमन, योग्य वजन-मापे आणि दरनियंत्रण यांवर त्यांनी भर दिला आहे. व्यापाऱ्यांचे शोषण टाळून नियंत्रित मुक्त व्यापाराची संकल्पना त्यांनी मांडली आहे.

५. **राज्यकोष आणि वित्तीय शिस्तीचा सिद्धांत :**राज्यकोष हा राज्यशक्तीचा कणा असल्याचे चाणक्य स्पष्ट करतात. उत्पन्न आणि खर्च यामध्ये संतुलन राखणे, अनावश्यक खर्च टाळणे आणि कोष सतत समृद्ध ठेवणे आवश्यक आहे. हा सिद्धांत आधुनिक वित्तीय शिस्त या संकल्पनेशी सुसंगत आहे.

६. **आपत्ती व्यवस्थापन आणि सामाजिक सुरक्षिततेचा सिद्धांत :** दुष्काळ, पूर, युद्ध किंवा महामारीच्या काळात राज्याने धान्यसाठे, आर्थिक मदत आणि पुनर्वसनाची व्यवस्था करावी, असे चाणक्य सांगतात. यावरून सामाजिक सुरक्षितता आणि कल्याणकारी राज्याच्या संकल्पनेची बीजे त्यांच्या विचारांत आढळतात.

७. **भ्रष्टाचारविरोधी आर्थिक नैतिकतेचा सिद्धांत :** चाणक्यांच्या अर्थशास्त्रात आर्थिक नैतिकतेला विशेष महत्त्व दिले आहे. राज्य अधिकाऱ्यांकडून होणारा अपहार रोखण्यासाठी कठोर देखरेख, लेखापरीक्षण आणि दंडव्यवस्था आवश्यक असल्याचे ते नमूद करतात. स्वच्छ प्रशासनाशिवाय सुदृढ अर्थव्यवस्था शक्य नाही, हा त्यांचा ठाम संदेश आहे.

२. चाणक्यांच्या व्यक्तिमत्त्वाशी निगडित काल्पनिक कथा (मिथक) आणि ऐतिहासिक पुरावे यांतील फरक

आचार्य चाणक्य हे इतिहासातील एक असे व्यक्तिमत्त्व आहेत ज्यांच्याभोवती अनेक दंतकथा विणल्या गेल्या आहेत. संशोधनाच्या दृष्टीने 'मिथक' आणि 'ऐतिहासिक वास्तव' यांतील फरक समजून घेणे अत्यंत आवश्यक आहे.

मुद्दा	काल्पनिक कथा (मिथक / दंतकथा)	ऐतिहासिक वास्तव (संशोधन आधारित)
जन्म आणि बालपण	काही कथांनुसार, चाणक्यांचा जन्म दातात झाला होता, जे त्यांच्या भविष्यातील सम्राट होण्याचे किंवा सम्राट घडवण्याचे लक्षण होते.	ऐतिहासिक पुराव्यांनुसार, त्यांचा जन्म तक्षशिला (सध्याचे पाकिस्तान) येथे एका ब्राह्मण कुटुंबात झाला. ते उच्चशिक्षित विद्वान होते.
नंद वंशाचा नाश	धनानंदाने चाणक्यांचा अपमान केला आणि त्यांची शेंडी ओढली, म्हणून त्यांनी ती उघडी ठेवून नंद वंशाचा नाशाची शपथ घेतली.	ही कथा लोकप्रिय असली तरी, नंद वंशाचा नाश करण्यामागे केवळ वैयक्तिक अपमान नसून नंदांचे जुलमी शासन आणि परकीय आक्रमणांचा (अलेक्झांडर) धोका हे मुख्य राजकीय कारण होते.
विखारी कन्या	चाणक्यांनी शत्रू राजांचा नाश करण्यासाठी 'विखारी कन्या' (ज्यांच्या रक्तात विष असायचे) तयार केल्या होत्या.	ऐतिहासिकदृष्ट्या अशा प्रकारच्या कन्यांचा वापर केल्याचे ठोस पुरावे नाहीत; मात्र त्यांनी 'गुप्तहेर' आणि 'साम-दाम-दंड-भेद' या रणनीतीचा वापर केल्याचे उल्लेख 'अर्थशास्त्रात' आहेत.
चंद्रगुप्ताची निवड	चंद्रगुप्त हा एका मोर पाळणाऱ्या कुटुंबातील (मुरा नावाच्या दासीचा मुलगा) होता आणि चाणक्यांनी त्याला रानात खेळताना पाहिले.	जैन आणि बौद्ध ग्रंथांनुसार, चंद्रगुप्त हा 'क्षत्रिय' मोरिया वंशाचा होता. चाणक्यांनी त्याला निवडून तक्षशिला येथे ८-९ वर्षे लष्करी आणि राजकीय शिक्षण दिले.
मृत्यू	काही कथांनुसार, चंद्रगुप्ताचा मुलगा बिंदुसार याच्या मंत्र्याने चाणक्यांना जिवंत जाळून मारले.	चाणक्यांच्या मृत्यूबाबत निश्चित पुरावे नाहीत, परंतु अनेक इतिहासकारांच्या मते त्यांनी वृद्धापकाळी स्वेच्छेने निवृत्ती स्वीकारली होती.

३. अर्थशास्त्र ग्रंथातील महसूल आणि व्यय (खर्च) यांचे नियोजन:

भ्रष्टाचार हा कोणत्याही राज्यव्यवस्थेसमोरील एक गंभीर आणि सार्वकालिक समस्या आहे. आचार्य चाणक्यांनी *अर्थशास्त्र* या ग्रंथात भ्रष्टाचाराचे स्वरूप, त्याची कारणे आणि त्यावरील उपाय यांचे अत्यंत सूक्ष्म व वास्तववादी विश्लेषण केले आहे. त्यांच्या मते भ्रष्टाचारामुळे केवळ राज्यकोषाचे नुकसान होत नाही, तर प्रशासनावरील जनतेचा विश्वासही ढासळतो. म्हणूनच त्यांनी भ्रष्टाचार निर्मूलनासाठी काही ठोस आणि कठोर उपाय सुचवले आहेत, जे आजच्या काळातही उपयुक्त आणि अंमलात आणण्यायोग्य आहेत.

१. **कठोर देखरेख आणि गुप्त तपासणी व्यवस्था :** चाणक्यांच्या मते राज्यातील अधिकारी प्रामाणिक राहावेत यासाठी केवळ नैतिक उपदेश पुरेसा ठरत नाही. त्यामुळे त्यांनी गुप्तहेरांच्या माध्यमातून अधिकाऱ्यांवर सातत्याने नजर ठेवण्याची व्यवस्था सुचवली. प्रशासनातील गैरप्रकार वेळेवर उघडकीस यावेत, हा यामागील उद्देश होता. ही संकल्पना आजच्या काळातील दक्षता यंत्रणा, अंतर्गत तपासणी आणि भ्रष्टाचारविरोधी पथकांशी मिळतीजुळती आहे.

२. **स्पष्ट नियम, कायदे आणि जबाबदारीची निश्चिती :** अर्थशास्त्र ग्रंथात प्रत्येक अधिकारी व कर्मचाऱ्याच्या कर्तव्यांची स्पष्ट मांडणी आढळते. कोणती चूक केल्यास कोणती शिक्षा होईल, हे आधीच ठरलेले असावे, असे चाणक्य सांगतात. यामुळे मनमानीला आळा बसतो. आधुनिक काळातील नियमाधिष्ठित प्रशासन आणि जबाबदारीची चौकट याच तत्त्वावर आधारित आहे.

३. **नियमित लेखापरीक्षण :** राज्यकोष व महसूल विभागातील सर्व आर्थिक व्यवहारांची नियमित तपासणी करणे आवश्यक आहे, असे चाणक्य ठामपणे सांगतात. उत्पन्न व खर्च यांचा लेखाजोखा पारदर्शक असावा, यावर त्यांनी विशेष

भर दिला. आजच्या काळातील महालेखापालाचे लेखापरीक्षण, आर्थिक व कार्यक्षमतेचे लेखापरीक्षण यांची मूळ संकल्पना येथे दिसून येते.

४. **योग्य वेतन आणि प्रोत्साहन व्यवस्था :** कमी वेतनामुळे अधिकारी भ्रष्ट मार्ग स्वीकारण्याची शक्यता वाढते, हे चाणक्यांनी ओळखले होते. म्हणूनच अधिकाऱ्यांना त्यांच्या कामाच्या स्वरूपानुसार व जबाबदारीनुसार योग्य वेतन देण्याचा त्यांनी सल्ला दिला. आधुनिक वेतन आयोग व कामगिरीवर आधारित प्रोत्साहन व्यवस्था याच विचारांवर आधारलेली आहे.

५. **कठोर शिक्षा आणि दंडव्यवस्था :** चाणक्यांच्या मते भ्रष्टाचार करणाऱ्यांना कठोर शिक्षा देणे अत्यावश्यक आहे, जेणेकरून इतरांनाही धडा मिळेल. दंड, पदच्युती व कारावास यांसारख्या शिक्षांचा त्यांनी उल्लेख केला आहे. ही भूमिका आजच्या प्रतिबंधात्मक शिक्षा सिद्धांताशी सुसंगत आहे.

६. **नैतिक प्रशिक्षण आणि मूल्याधिष्ठित प्रशासन :** चाणक्य जरी व्यवहारवादी होते, तरी त्यांनी नैतिकतेला पूर्णतः दुर्लक्ष केले नाही. अधिकाऱ्यांमध्ये कर्तव्यभावना, प्रामाणिकपणा व राज्यनिष्ठा निर्माण होणे आवश्यक असल्याचे त्यांनी स्पष्ट केले. आजच्या काळातील नैतिक प्रशिक्षण व लोकसेवेतील मूल्यसंस्कार याच विचारधारेतून विकसित झाले आहेत.

४.चाणक्य नीतीची आजच्या काळातील प्रासंगिकता

आचार्य चाणक्यांनी मांडलेली नीती ही केवळ प्राचीन राजकारणापुरती मर्यादित नसून ती मानवी वर्तन, प्रशासन, अर्थकारण आणि समाजरचनेशी निगडित आहे. *अर्थशास्त्र* आणि चाणक्यनीतीत व्यक्त झालेली ही तत्त्वे आजच्या जागतिकीकरणाच्या, स्पर्धात्मक आणि तंत्रज्ञानप्रधान युगातही तितकीच उपयुक्त आणि मार्गदर्शक ठरतात. बदलत्या काळात साधने बदलली असली, तरी प्रशासन, सत्ता, नैतिकता आणि लोककल्याण यांचे मूलभूत प्रश्न तसेच आहेत.

१. **सुशासन आणि प्रशासनातील प्रासंगिकता :** चाणक्यांच्या मते राज्याचे खरे सामर्थ्य हे प्रभावी आणि न्याय्य प्रशासनात असते. "प्रजा-सुखे सुखं राज्ञः" हा सिद्धांत आजच्या लोकशाही व्यवस्थेचा मूलभूत आधार मानता येतो. पारदर्शकता, जबाबदारी, कायद्याचे राज्य आणि भ्रष्टाचारमुक्त प्रशासन हे सर्व घटक लोकाभिमुख प्रशासन या संकल्पनेशी थेट जोडलेले आहेत.

२. **आर्थिक धोरणे आणि विकास :** चाणक्यांनी आर्थिक शिस्त, संतुलित करप्रणाली, कृषी–उद्योग–व्यापार यांचा समन्वय आणि राज्यकोषाची सुरक्षितता यांवर भर दिला. आजच्या काळात शाश्वत विकास , वित्तीय शिस्त आणि समावेशक विकास या संकल्पना त्याच विचारांचे आधुनिक रूप आहेत. त्यामुळे सार्वजनिक अर्थव्यवस्था आणि धोरणनिर्मितीत चाणक्यनीती आजही उपयुक्त ठरते.

३. **भ्रष्टाचारविरोधी भूमिका :** चाणक्यांनी भ्रष्टाचार हा राज्याच्या ऱ्हासाचा मुख्य कारण मानला. कठोर देखरेख, स्पष्ट नियम आणि कठोर शिक्षा यांवर त्यांनी भर दिला. आजच्या काळातील भ्रष्टाचारविरोधी कायदे, सतर्कता यंत्रणा आणि संस्थात्मक उत्तरदायित्व या सगळ्यांची बीजे चाणक्यनीतीत आढळतात.

४. **नेतृत्व आणि निर्णयक्षमता :** आचार्य चाणक्यांच्या मते शासक हा बुद्धिमान, दूरदृष्टी असलेला, संयमी, कर्तव्यदक्ष आणि लोकहिताचा सातत्याने विचार करणारा असावा. केवळ सत्ता प्राप्त करणे नव्हे, तर ती योग्य पद्धतीने वापरणे हेच खरे नेतृत्व असल्याचे त्यांनी अधोरेखित केले. आजच्या काळातील राजकीय, प्रशासकीय तसेच कॉर्पोरेट क्षेत्रातील नेतृत्वासाठीही ही तत्त्वे तितकीच उपयुक्त ठरतात. धोरणात्मक विचारशक्ती ,जोखीम व्यवस्थापन आणि नैतिक नेतृत्व या आधुनिक संकल्पनांशी चाणक्यनीती पूर्णतः सुसंगत असल्याचे दिसून येते.

५. **कूटनीती आणि आंतरराष्ट्रीय संबंध :** चाणक्यांची कूटनीती ही केवळ फसवणूक किंवा कपटावर आधारित नसून राज्याच्या सुरक्षिततेसाठी आणि दीर्घकालीन स्थैर्यासाठी आवश्यक असलेली व्यवहार्य नीती आहे. राज्यहिताला सर्वोच्च स्थान देत योग्य वेळी साम, दाम, दंड आणि भेद या उपाययोजनांचा विचारपूर्वक वापर करण्याची त्यांनी मांडणी केली. आजच्या आंतरराष्ट्रीय राजकारणात राष्ट्रीय हित,व्यवहार्य राजकारण आणि धोरणात्मक मैत्री करार यांमध्ये चाणक्यनीतीची छाप स्पष्टपणे आढळते.

६. सामाजिक स्थैर्य आणि लोककल्याण : चाणक्यांनी समाजातील दुर्बल आणि वंचित घटकांचे संरक्षण, आपत्तीच्या काळात राज्याची सक्रिय जबाबदारी आणि सामाजिक सुव्यवस्था टिकवून ठेवणे यांवर विशेष भर दिला आहे. त्यांच्या मते प्रजेचे कल्याण हेच राज्याचे अंतिम ध्येय असले पाहिजे. आजच्या काळातील कल्याणकारी राज्याची संकल्पना ,सामाजिक सुरक्षा योजना आणि आपत्ती व्यवस्थापन धोरणे ही चाणक्यांच्या लोककल्याणविषयक विचारांचीच आधुनिक रूपे मानता येतात.

समारोप

प्रस्तुत संशोधनातून असे निष्कर्ष निघतात की आचार्य चाणक्यांची अर्थनीती ही मिथकांपेक्षा अधिक वास्तववादी, नैतिक आणि लोकहितकारी आहे. साहित्य व संस्कृतीतील कथनांनी निर्माण केलेल्या प्रतिमांपलीकडे जाऊन त्यांच्या विचारांचा अभ्यास करणे आवश्यक आहे. आजच्या काळात सुशासन, आर्थिक शिस्त आणि जबाबदार प्रशासनासाठी चाणक्यांचे अर्थविचार अत्यंत प्रेरणादायी व उपयुक्त ठरतात

आचार्य चाणक्यांची अर्थनीती ही केवळ 'सत्ता मिळवणे' इतकीच मर्यादित नव्हती.त्यांचे विचार आजही आधुनिक व्यवस्थापन आणि भू-राजकारणात तितकेच लागू पडतात. आधुनिक सार्वजनिक अर्थशास्त्र, वित्तीय प्रशासन आणि कल्याणकारी राज्याच्या अनेक संकल्पनांची मुळे चाणक्यांच्या *अर्थशास्त्रात* आढळतात. त्यामुळे चाणक्यांचे आर्थिक सिद्धांत केवळ ऐतिहासिक महत्त्वाचे नसून आजच्या काळातही मार्गदर्शक ठरतात.

भ्रष्टाचार निर्मूलनासाठी चाणक्यांनी सुचवलेले उपाय हे काळाच्या कसोटीवर उतरलेले आहेत. कठोर देखरेख, स्पष्ट कायदे, पारदर्शक लेखापरीक्षण, योग्य वेतन आणि नैतिक प्रशासन हे सर्व घटक आजही तितकेच आवश्यक आहेत. त्यामुळे असे म्हणणे योग्य ठरेल की चाणक्यांचे भ्रष्टाचारविरोधी उपाय केवळ ऐतिहासिक महत्त्वाचे नसून आजच्या प्रशासनातही प्रभावीपणे अंमलात आणण्यायोग्य आहेत.

चाणक्य नीती ही काळाच्या मर्यादांमध्ये अडकलेली नसून ती कालातीत आहे. बदलत्या सामाजिक, आर्थिक आणि राजकीय परिस्थितीतही तिची मूलभूत तत्त्वे तितकीच लागू पडतात. सुशासन, आर्थिक शिस्त, नैतिक नेतृत्व आणि लोककल्याण या क्षेत्रांत चाणक्यनीती आजही मार्गदर्शक ठरते. त्यामुळे चाणक्यनीतीचा अभ्यास हा केवळ ऐतिहासिक दृष्टिकोनातून नव्हे, तर वर्तमान आणि भविष्याच्या दृष्टीनेही अत्यंत आवश्यक आहे.

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Retelling And Reinterpretation of Myths In Literature: A Study of Girish Karnad's Nagamandala

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Abstract

"Myths significantly shape human consciousness, cultural values, and social structures, evolving through retelling in varied contexts. Modern Indian literature, particularly through dramatist Girish Karnad, utilizes myths and folklore to critique prevailing ideologies, giving voice to marginalized perspectives. Karnad's play Nagamandala (1988) exemplifies this, drawing on Kannada folk narratives to challenge patriarchal norms regarding marriage and gender roles. This research explores Nagamandala as a site of mythic reconstruction, emphasizing female subjectivity and resistance within a patriarchal framework. Employing feminist literary theory, it analyzes Karnad's use of oral traditions, magical realism, and symbolic motifs, illustrating how the play redefines myth from a tool of social control to a space for female empowerment" (Kaur, 2016) and agency. Ultimately, it highlights myth's relevance in articulating identity and power in contemporary Indian literature.

Keywords: *Myth Retelling, Reinterpretation, Indian Drama, Girish Karnad, Nagamandala, Folklore, Feminism, Patriarchy.*

Introduction:

Myths are foundational narratives that explain the origin of the world, human relationships, moral codes, and social institutions. "In Indian culture, myths are deeply embedded in religious texts, folklore, rituals, and oral storytelling traditions. Traditionally, these myths have often reinforced social hierarchies, especially those related to gender, power, and authority. However, in modern literature, myths are increasingly revisited not to glorify tradition but to interrogate and reinterpret it. Retelling myths allows writers to challenge dominant narratives and to provide alternative perspectives, particularly those of marginalized groups. As Northrop Frye observes, myths function as "structural principles of literature," capable of being reshaped to reflect contemporary concerns. In postcolonial Indian literature, myth retelling has become a powerful strategy to negotiate" (Kaur, 2016) the tension between tradition and modernity.

"Girish Karnad occupies a significant place among Indian playwrights for his innovative use of myth, history, and folklore. Plays such as Yayati, Hayavadana, Tughlaq, and Nagamandala demonstrate his ability to reinterpret classical and folk narratives through modern sensibilities. Nagamandala based on two Kannada folk tales, is a play-within-a-play that explores themes of marriage, fidelity, female desire, and patriarchal control. This paper argues that Nagamandala is not merely a retelling of myth but a reinterpretation that exposes the injustices embedded within traditional narratives and reimagines myth as a medium of female" (Limje & Saulat, 2022) empowerment.

Objectives And Research Methodology:

The objective of the research paper is to examine the perspective of myth retelling in the context of contemporary writing. The paper recognizes the context wherein traditional myths are redefined to reflect the concerns of contemporary society. The paper attempts to understand the play Nagamandala in the context of the creative retelling of Indian folk myths. The paper also focuses on the manner in which the writer incorporates folk myths to create a contemporary play. It is a critical examination of the play in the context of the representation of women and the patriarchal systems in the play. The research paper also examines the play from the perspective of mythic symbols and myths, folklore, oral traditions, and the formulation of the play to highlight the manner in which myth is utilized as a tool to create contemporary Indian drama.

Here, the methodology that has been followed is qualitative and analytical. The primary sources of the research are Girish Karnad's Nagamandala. The secondary sources of the research would comprise books,

articles, and journals pertaining to the subject of the mythical story, folklore, feminist studies, and Indian English drama. The research is further influenced by feminist theories and mythological criticisms.

Girish Karnad And The Use of Myth

Girish Karnad constantly employs myth and folklore not as relics of the past but as dynamic narrative frameworks capable of interrogating contemporary social realities. His engagement with mythology is neither nostalgic nor escapist; instead, it is deeply critical. As Karnad himself notes, myths "provide a structure through which one can examine contemporary situations" (Karnad, Collected Plays). In plays such as Yayati, Hayavadana, Tughlaq, and Nagamandala, myth becomes a medium to explore questions of identity, power, desire, and authority. Nagamandala draws heavily from the oral storytelling traditions of Karnataka and is based on two folk tales collected by A. K. Ramanujan. The play opens with a self-reflexive frame narrative in which stories come alive and assert their autonomy. The Story proclaims, "A story is not a story unless it is told", foregrounding the performative and evolving nature of folklore. This metafictional device emphasizes that myths survive not through fixation but through retelling, alteration, and reinterpretation.

"The central narrative revolves around Rani, a young bride trapped in a loveless and oppressive marriage, and a serpent (Naga) who assumes the form of her husband at night. By blending the human and the supernatural, Karnad creates a mythical space where social norms can be questioned without direct realism. The serpent motif, deeply embedded in Hindu mythology, traditionally symbolizes fertility, regeneration, power, and male energy. Karnad reworks this symbol to foreground female emotional and sexual fulfilment, thereby shifting the moral focus of the myth. The interpenetration of the human and non-human worlds functions as what Brecht would call a "distancing effect," reminding the audience that they are witnessing a constructed narrative while simultaneously" (Longchar, 2025) provoking critical engagement. Myth, in Nagamandala, thus becomes a lens through which the contradictions of patriarchal society are exposed.

Reinterpretation of Female Identity and Desire

One of the most radical aspects of Karnad's myth retelling in Nagamandala is its reconfiguration of female identity and desire. "Traditional myths often portray women as passive bearers of virtue, whose value is determined by chastity, obedience, and sacrifice. Karnad subverts this paradigm by allowing Rani's inner life, desires, and emotional needs to occupy the center of the narrative. At the beginning of the play, Rani appears as the archetypal submissive wife, confined within the domestic space and subjected to her husband Appanna's cruelty. Appanna treats her as property rather than a partner, locking her inside the house and denying her emotional intimacy. Rani's lament, Why was I brought here like a bird in a cage? poignantly captures the suffocating nature" (Longchar, 2025) of patriarchal marriage.

"Marriage in Nagamandala is portrayed not as a sacred institution but as a site of female suffering and silencing. Appanna openly maintains a concubine and justifies his behaviour, while Rani is subjected to suspicion and surveillance. This double standard exposes the deeply gendered moral framework of society. As Rani observes bitterly, "They say a woman's honour is fragile, but a man's honour has no weight at all." The entry of the Naga marks a turning point in Rani's life. Unlike Appanna, the Naga treats her with tenderness, listens to her, and affirms her worth. Through this mythic intervention, Rani experiences emotional and sexual fulfilment for the first time. Importantly, the play does not punish her for this awakening. Instead, it presents her desire as natural and legitimate. This marks a significant departure from traditional myths where women who transgress sexual norms are often condemned or destroyed. The climactic trial scene powerfully demonstrates Karnad's reinterpretation of myth. When Rani declares before the village elders, "I have not touched any man other than my husband and this cobra," her statement simultaneously adheres to and subverts patriarchal logic. While technically true, it exposes the absurdity of a moral system that values ritual purity over emotional" (Longchar, 2025) truth. Myth here becomes a space of irony, resistance, and critique rather than moral enforcement.

Cultural Continuity and Modern Relevance

While Nagamandala offers a sharp critique of patriarchal values, it does not reject tradition outright. Instead, Karnad engages in a dialogue with cultural heritage, demonstrating how myths can be preserved while being reinterpreted. The play's reliance on folk rituals, oral storytelling, and mythic symbols affirms the continuity of Indian cultural traditions even as their meanings are transformed. The fire ordeal, a recurring motif in Indian mythology, is traditionally used to test a woman's chastity, as seen in the *Ramayana*. In Nagamandala, this ritual becomes a site of profound irony. Rani emerges unscathed from the fire, and the same society that doubted her now elevates her to divine status. One of the elders proclaims, "She is no ordinary" (Dagar, 2023) woman. She is a goddess." This sudden reversal exposes the instability and hypocrisy of patriarchal authority.

By transforming a symbol of "female subjugation into one of empowerment, Karnad reveals how myths can be reclaimed and rewritten. Rani's deification does not resolve the injustice she has suffered; instead, it underscores the absurdity of a system that oscillates between condemning and worshipping women without granting them true autonomy. The play thus demonstrates that myths are not fixed moral codes but adaptable narratives capable of addressing modern concerns such as gender equality, identity, and personal freedom. Karnad's reinterpretation ensures that myth remains relevant to contemporary" (Shabdita & Kumar, 2025) audiences while retaining its cultural roots.

This study is informed by myth criticism and feminist literary theory. Northrop Frye's concept of myth as a recurring narrative structure provides a useful framework for understanding how "Karnad reshapes traditional motifs to express modern anxieties. Frye's assertion that myths can be endlessly reworked supports the argument that Nagamandala is not a repetition but a transformation of folklore. Feminist theory offers a critical lens to examine the patriarchal structures that govern marriage, sexuality, and female identity in the play. Simone de Beauvoir's idea that womanhood is socially constructed rather than biologically determined resonates strongly with Rani's transformation from silence to self-assertion. Additionally, postmodern approaches to myth" (Dagar, 2023) reinterpretation are relevant, as Nagamandala destabilizes absolute moral binaries and questions the authority of traditional narratives.

Findings And Discussion:

The analysis reveals that Nagamandala employs myth as a progressive and subversive tool rather than a conservative one. Karnad's retelling exposes patriarchal injustice, challenges gender stereotypes, and redefines moral authority. The play demonstrates that myths are not immutable truths but living narratives capable of being reshaped to serve emancipatory purposes. By foregrounding female experience and desire, Nagamandala transforms myth from an instrument of social control into a medium of resistance. The fusion of folklore, symbolism, and modern dramaturgy enables Karnad to critique social realities while remaining rooted in cultural tradition.

Conclusion:

Nagamandala stands as a significant example of myth retelling in modern Indian literature. By reinterpreting folk myths through a feminist lens, Girish Karnad transforms traditional narratives into powerful instruments of social critique. The play challenges patriarchal marriage, exposes moral hypocrisy, and foregrounds female agency and emotional truth. Through symbolic imagery, oral storytelling techniques, and mythic motifs such as the serpent and the fire ordeal, Karnad demonstrates that myths can be reclaimed and reimagined. Nagamandala ultimately affirms that retelling myths is not an act of nostalgia but a dynamic process of redefining truth, identity, and justice in contemporary society.

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Myth and Spiritual Symbolism in Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*

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Abstract

Present research paper highlights the influence of Indian tradition, myth, religion and philosophy on modern spiritual narrative through Hermann Hesse's Siddhartha (1922). Spiritual quest, renunciation, and enlightenment are associated with Hinduism and Buddhism. This paper examines how Hesse adapts Indian myths and symbols like -character of Buddha, the motif of the wandering sanyasi, and the river as a cosmic symbol—to express a modern, individualistic vision of self-realization. The study argues that Siddhartha presents modern form of spirituality and myth, where ancient symbols are used to present day problem of society like alienation, the limits of institutional religion, and the search for firsthand experience.

Key Words: *Myth, Spiritual Quest, River Symbolism, Enlightenment, Hermann Hesse, Siddhartha*

Introduction

Modern literature frequently uses ancient myths to explore spiritual and psychological dilemmas of contemporary society. Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* is one of the best examples of the reinterpretation of myth. This novel was written during the post-World War I period. The novel reflects the disillusionment and alienation of modern people. Hesse presents the spiritual awakening of protagonist. Though the novel borrows names, settings, and symbols from Hinduism and Buddhism, it does not intend to reproduce orthodox religious teachings. Instead, it reshapes mythic patterns into a modern philosophical parable centered on individual experience. This paper explores how mythical symbols are used in *Siddhartha.*

Concept of Myth

Myth is no longer considered as a false or primitive story in literary and cultural studies, but it is understood as a symbolic narrative that expresses fundamental truths about human existence. Modern critics sees myth as a powerful imaginative structure through which societies expresses their deepest desires, wishes, fears, beliefs, and values. Northrop Frye says in his book 'Anatomy of Criticism' says,

"Myth is the structural principle of literature." (p.34)

According to him, mythic patterns such as death and rebirth, the quest, fall and rise and the journey of the hero gave shape to literature narratives. It means myth provides basic patterns which teach about life and shapes the literature. For Jung, mythic figures such as person with super power, the seeker, the wise old man, the mother, and the enlightened sage represent psychological realities shared by all human beings across cultures. Carl Jung states in his book *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* states that,

"Myths are original revelations of the pre-conscious psyche…"(p.18)

He views myths as expressions of archetypes arising from the collective unconscious. Hesse's *Siddhartha* also follows same pattern such as hero's journey, rejection, temptation, fall, and enlightenment—into a modern narrative of self-discovery. The novel is all about spiritual quest of protagonist, renunciation, temptation, enlightenment and self discovery. Hesse has presented Indian religious myths in symbolic patterns that articulate the modern individual's inward journey towards self-realization. Hence, myth in *Siddhartha* functions as both a narrative structure and a symbolic language through which spiritual experience is expressed in a modern literary form.

Myth in *Siddhartha*

Myth of the quest founds in many religions. In novel , Sidhartha's journey presents his quest. He left home in search knowledge through self experience. In this journey he suffered a lot but eventually found wisdom. His journey as a young boy of Brahmin who gives importance to materialistic life to spirituality aligns Siddhartha with mythological figures of saints and mendicants who has refused worldly attachments

and temptations to achieve ultimate truth of life. Hesse prefers to gain knowledge from personal experience not from philosophical books. Sanyasi, medicant, and saints these personalities are very famous in Indian mythology. They taught society about spirituality. They left the materialistic life in search of self discovery. Protagonist of *Sidhartha* walked on same path. He refused comfortable family life , wealth, prestige and worldly pleasure. Yet, unlike traditional ascetics who seek liberation through strict discipline, Siddhartha ultimately realizes that neither extreme asceticism nor indulgence alone leads to enlightenment. Though Hermann Hesse supports the ideal of abandonment in spiritual awakening, but reject the rigid and strict religious paths. He presented term refusal of worldly attachments is just a one phase in the life of human beings. It is not an end of everything. The figure of the renouncer or ascetic (sanyasi) who abandons domestic life in search of spiritual truth is a recurring archetype in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain narratives. Such figures are often represented as spiritually superior to householders, embodying the ideal of detachment from material desire. In *Siddhartha*, Hermann Hesse draws upon this mythic archetype of renunciation but reshapes it to reflect a modern, experiential understanding of spirituality.

Hesse has presented traditional mythic pattern of renunciation through the decision of Sidhartha . he has decided to leave his family life join the Samanas. He followed the life style of Indian sages who practices fasting, meditation, simple life to overcome human vices like ego, jealousy, treachery and anger. However, Hesse does not present asceticism as an ultimate spiritual solution. Siddhartha gradually becomes aware that extreme self-denial merely suppresses the self without truly overcoming desire. This realization marks a critical departure from traditional ascetic myths. Novel presents Sidhartha's holistic understanding of life as a beautiful phase of life because he experienced everything like common man - love, wealth, and emotional suffering and finally gained spiritual satisfaction through self discovery. Siddhartha acquires experiential knowledge that pure ascetic discipline could not provide. Ultimately, the novel redefines the myth of renunciation by integrating it into a broader spiritual journey. Sidhartha gained true knowledge from deep acceptance and understanding of human values not from rejection of human values.

River in the novel used as powerful mythical symbol . In mythology, river presented as pure, sacred form of water which associated with purification, continuity, cyclical time, and the unity of life. In the novel plays role of spiritual guide to Siddhartha. River taught him value of silence and continuity in work. Siddhartha learns to listen to the river, and in its many voices he hears the unity of all experiences—joy and sorrow, birth and death, desire and renunciation. Siddhartha's final state of serenity by the river reflects a balanced form of renunciation—one rooted in inner freedom rather than outward withdrawal. Furthermore, the river plays a role in Siddhartha's symbolic rebirth. When disappointed from life he stands by the river to end his life but the voice of river gave him strength and positivity.

Hermann Hesse has used figure of Gotama, the Buddha as a powerful mythical symbol. Gigure of Gotama presented as a symbol of serene and spiritual perfect person. In Buddhism Gotama worshiped as Guru of discipline who encourages to walk on sacred path of life. In the novel Siddhartha met Gotama but he refused to became a students of Gotama. Siddhartha believes that spiritual awakening is the matter of self discovery all things cannot be learnt through teaching. It breaks the traditional relationship between teacher and student. Myth in *Siddhartha* thus becomes a flexible symbolic language through which modern spiritual alienation and the search for meaning are articulated.

Conclusion

Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* demonstrate how myth can be creatively adapted in modern literature to address contemporary spiritual and existential concerns. Portrayal of Indian religious myths and archetypes—the quest motif, renunciation, the enlightened sage, and the sacred river—Hesse constructs a modern spiritual parable centered on personal experience and inner realization. The novel neither rejects myth nor accepts it uncritically; instead, it transforms myth into a vehicle for modern self-discovery. *Siddhartha* can therefore be read as a modern spiritual myth that bridges ancient symbolic traditions with the psychological and philosophical questions of the twentieth century. Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* stands as a powerful example of how myth can be creatively reinterpreted in modern literature to address contemporary spiritual and existential concerns. The novel demonstrates that myth in modern fiction does not function as a

rigid system of belief but as a flexible symbolic language capable of expressing inner psychological and spiritual realities. By reshaping traditional mythic patterns to emphasize personal experience over doctrinal learning, Hesse bridges ancient Eastern spirituality with modern Western individualism. Siddhartha's journey affirms that enlightenment is not achieved through blind adherence to tradition or extreme asceticism, but through the integration of all aspects of life—suffering and joy, renunciation and engagement, solitude and relationship.The novel suggests that myth continues to possess enduring relevance, offering not escapist fantasy but profound insight into the timeless patterns of human existence. Through its mythic symbolism, *Siddhartha* invites readers to reflect on their own spiritual journeys and the possibility of achieving harmony within a fragmented modern world.

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The Representation and Reinterpretation of Myths in the Folk Arts of Maharashtra

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Abstract

This research paper explores how the traditional folk arts of Maharashtra like Tamasha, Dashavatar, Gondhal, Lavani, and Povada bring ancient Hindu myths to life in the heart of everyday society. It shows that these performances are far more than simple storytelling; they are dynamic, living practices that use local language, humor, and music to adapt grand myths into relatable experiences. These arts help shape a distinct Maharashtrian identity, blending spiritual devotion from the Bhakti movement with the heroic ideals of Maratha history, ensuring myths remain relevant and meaningful to local communities. Furthermore, the paper explains how these folk arts serve dual purposes: they strengthen social bonds and shared values while also providing a safe space for questioning authority and addressing modern problems. Through satire, ritual, and audience participation, myths become flexible tools for social commentary, allowing communities to navigate issues like injustice and gender roles without abandoning tradition. In essence, this paper reveals that in Maharashtra, mythology is not locked in the past but is continuously recreated through performance, acting as a vital bridge between heritage and contemporary life.

Key words: *Myth, Folk culture, Dashavatar, Gondhal, Tamasha, Lavani, Povada , Shahiri, Social Cohesion and Adaptive Resilience, etc…*

Myth as a Cultural Performance in Maharashtra

The rich tapestry of Maharashtra's folk culture is deeply interwoven with mythological narratives, not as a separate sacred domain but as an integral thread in the fabric of everyday life. Unlike classical forms like Kathakali or Bharatanatyam, which are often bound by codified grammar (shastra) and performed in sanctified spaces, folk arts such as Tamasha and Gondhal are characterized by their radical contingency. Their power derives from improvisation (upaj), the use of pungent regional dialects (boli), and a direct, often raucous, audience engagement that breaks the fourth wall. These performances are embedded in the agrarian calendar, lifecycle rituals, and communal festivals, making myth a lived, seasonal, and participatory experience. The mythology performed is less about textual fidelity to the Sanskrit puranas and more about their affective resonance within the local ecology where the story of Lord Vitthal's pilgrimage to Pandharpur is mirrored in the Warkari's physical journey, and where the Goddess Ambabai's power is invoked in a Gondhal to ensure a good harvest or a child's health. This background frames folk art not as a derivative of high culture, but as a parallel, autonomous system of knowledge transmission and cultural expression .

Furthermore, this integration of myth into the mundane operates through a principle of ritual practicality, where the performance itself is conceived as a generative act with tangible consequences. The folk artist is not merely a storyteller but a ritual functionary, a kalakar-guru, whose rendition is believed to influence the material and spiritual well-being of the community. The Gondhali's songs are an offering (naivedya) that placates the goddess; the comic disputes between Shiva and Parvati in a Tamasha interlude are not just entertainment but a re-enactment of cosmic balance meant to invoke fertility and laughter as blessings. This collapses the distinction between actor, priest, and community participant, embedding the mythological narrative within a framework of cause and effect. The myth, therefore, is performed not only to be remembered but to act upon the world to heal illness, bless a marriage, ensure rain, or sanction social critique. In this context, the improvisation and audience interaction are not merely stylistic choices but essential to the ritual's efficacy, as the collective energy and response of the gathered community complete the circuit of spiritual and social power summoned by the performance.

Historical and Cultural Context

The profound and transformative influence of the Varkari Sant tradition—spearheaded by poet-saints like Jnaneshwar, Namdev, Tukaram, and Eknath fundamentally reshaped the spiritual and cultural landscape of Maharashtra, providing the primary ideological engine for its folk arts. This movement did more than democratize access to the divine; it engineered a radical shift from Sanskritic, priestly ritual (karmakanda) to an intimate, personal, and emotionally charged devotion (bhakti) expressed in the vibrant vernacular. This theological revolution found its natural embodiment in performance. Folk arts became the primary secular-sacred platforms for this devotional expression, translating complex philosophy into accessible narrative and song. The myths central to Varkari devotion particularly those of Vitthal of Pandharpur, the quintessential standing god who awaits his devotees were not merely recounted but experientially re-created. In a Gondhal or a Bharud (a short, allegorical play by Eknath), the devotee's longing (viraha) for God, as expressed by Tukaram, was dramatized, making the audience participants in a collective spiritual journey. Furthermore, the Bhakti ethos, with its explicit challenge to caste hierarchies and gender restrictions, infused folk arts with a latent social radicalism. The arts began to privilege the devotion of marginalized characters from the Puranas, using the myth to subtly question social orthodoxy while celebrating a faith based on emotion and service, not birthright.

The rise of the Maratha Empire catalyzed a powerful fusion of history and mythology within Maharashtra's folk arts. Forms like the heroic Povada (ballad) and stirring Shahiri (martial songs) became essential tools for transforming recent history into living legend, making these narratives accessible and thrilling to the common populace. In this process, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was not merely commemorated as a king but was re-imagined through a mythological lens, his strategies likened to Krishna's and his righteousness to Rama's, elevating his historical struggle to a sacred, dharmic mission. This created a potent regional symbology where political resistance gained cosmic validation, and folk performers acted as bards of a secular religion, seamlessly blending tales of Shivaji's battle with Afzal Khan with echoes of divine battles from the Puranas. This crafted a robust warrior ethos centered on Desh Dharma (defense of land and faith), which became intertwined with the region's profound Bhakti sensibility. The resulting Marathi identity presented spiritual devotion and martial courage as inseparable, a holistic ideal vigorously performed and perpetuated through folk tradition well into the Peshwa period and beyond, ensuring the warrior ethos remained a core pillar of cultural memory.

Myth in Major Folk Art Forms in Maharashtra:

A) **Dashavatar**

The Dashavatar performance of the Konkan coast is a vivid embodiment of myth as total theatre, where the cosmic cycle of Vishnu's ten incarnations is rendered tangible through a powerful synthesis of craft, movement, and communal ritual. Unlike proscenium-based narratives, Dashavatar is characterized by its use of imposing, brightly painted wooden masks (mukha) that are not merely costumes but sacred icons, believed to temporarily house the deity's essence. The performers' movements are deliberately stylized and heavy, creating a sense of otherworldly power rather than naturalistic acting. Accompanied by the resonant rhythm of the dhol and tasha drums, and chanted verses in the local Konkani-Marathi dialect, the performance transforms a village square or temple courtyard into a liminal space where cosmic time collapses. This art form is deeply embedded in the region's agrarian and coastal life, typically performed during the harvest festival of Shimga (Holi) or in fulfillment of vows, directly linking the invocation of divine power to community well-being, prosperity, and gratitude.

The mythological adaptation within Dashavatar reveals a profound syncretic and anticipatory symbolism. While it faithfully enacts universal Vaishnava episodes such as Narasimha's fierce liberation or Vamana's world-covering stride its unique significance often lies in the heightened emphasis on Kalki, the final, future avatar. In the Konkan tradition, Kalki is not a distant theological concept but an imminent, visceral force. Mounted on a white horse and wielding a blazing sword, this destroyer of Kali Yuga (the age of discord) is interpreted through a distinctly local lens as a restorer of ecological balance, social justice, and moral order. This emphasis likely mirrors a historical and collective longing for deliverance from successive

waves of colonial rule, feudal oppression, and natural calamities endemic to the coastal region. Thus, Dashavatar does more than recount a Puranic genealogy; it performs a cyclical prophecy, offering the community a cathartic vision of the oppressive present being violently cleansed, thereby reinforcing hope and resilience through the framework of divine promise.

B) Gondhal

Gondhal is not merely a performance but a vital ritual technology, a structured invocation conducted primarily by the Gondhali community to channel the presence and power of the goddess. The performance is an intense, multisensory experience designed to alter the spiritual atmosphere of a household or village. It unfolds over several hours, often through the night, building in rhythmic intensity. Central to the ritual is the playing of the tambora (a string instrument) and the rhythmic jingle of ghungroos (ankle bells), as the lead singer-narrator, the Gondhali, leads a troupe in vigorous circular dances and soulful, repetitive singing. The event is saturated with ritual offerings (naivedya) incense, flowers, food, and especially the ceremonial breaking of a coconut, symbolizing the destruction of the ego and the offering of one's inner self. Traditionally commissioned for critical life-cycle events like weddings, thread ceremonies, or after a birth, Gondhal serves as a spiritual safeguard, a means to appease the goddess and ensure her benevolent gaze during times of vulnerability and transition, thereby embedding the divine directly into the domestic sphere.

The mythological adaptation in Gondhal is fundamentally Shakta, centering the fierce, protective, and generative aspects of the feminine divine. While it draws upon pan-Indian narratives of Goddess Sati's self-sacrifice and Parvati's ascetic devotion to Shiva, its core lies in the hyper-localized lore of regional mother goddesses like Ambabai (of Tuljapur), Renuka (Yellamma), and Bhavani. The ritual songs (gondhal) meticulously recount these goddesses' local manifestations, their battles against specific demons threatening the land, and their miracles for devotees. This is not abstract myth-telling; it is an act of reminding, inviting, and compelling the goddess to re-enact her protective role. By chanting her localized names and victories, the Gondhali reaffirms her covenant with the community, linking her myth directly to contemporary concerns of fertility, health, and protection from evil spirits (drishti and bhoot-preta). Thus, Gondhal translates the grand Shakta cosmology into a tangible, familial contract, where the goddess's mythic power is performatively harnessed to manage the uncertainties of life, asserting that divine agency is immediate, accessible, and rooted in the Maharashtrian soil.

C) Tamasha And Lavani

Tamasha, often mischaracterized as purely secular entertainment, operates within a sophisticated framework where mythology provides both a legitimizing structure and a satirical arsenal. While its core comprises bawdy comedy, social sketches (vag), and the electrifying Lavani, it frequently commences with a ritualistic prologue known as the Gana. This opening is dedicated to Ganapati and Saraswati, immediately situating the performance within a sacred cosmos. More importantly, mythological narratives are used as framing devices and allegorical tools. The clown-vidushak or the lead singer (sutradhar) might weave a tale of Shiva's disguise as a beggar to comment on societal hypocrisy, or use Yama's futile attempts to claim a devotee to lampoon corrupt officials. This allows performers to navigate dangerous social and political critique under the protective guise of a sacred, timeless story. The myth becomes a shared code between performer and audience, a safe conduit for expressing dissent, where laughter directed at a tipsy, domestic Shiva is also a subtle critique of authoritarian patriarchy.

Lavani, the poetic and kinetic heart of Tamasha, engages in a powerful embodied demystification of divinity. Through its provocative dance movements, percussive rhythms, and intensely emotive lyrics, Lavani translates cosmic myths into the raw language of human corporeality and emotion. The love of Krishna and Radha is its central trope, but here, Radha's viraha (passionate longing) is rendered not as a symbol of soulful devotion but as a tangible, physical, and often frustrated human desire. The singer, embodying Radha, laments with a defiance and sensuality that challenges idealized, passive portrayals of the gopi. Similarly, songs about Shiva and Parvati often depict their marital squabbles with domestic familiarity, reducing the cosmic couple to the level of a quarreling village husband and wife. This humanization serves a critical function: it collapses the hierarchical distance between the divine and the mortal, suggesting that the

gods experience the same folly, passion, and injustice as humans. Consequently, Lavani becomes a potent medium for social commentary, using Radha's plight to articulate women's socio-sexual constraints and using the gods' imperfections to highlight and ridicule human follies, thereby making mythology a mirror for earthly society.

D) Povada And Shahiri: The Ballad Tradition

The Povada represents the pinnacle of mytho-historical synthesis in Maharashtrian folk arts, a genre where recent history is deliberately and ceremoniously elevated to the sacred stature of epic. These heroic ballads, traditionally performed with vigorous rhythmic accompaniment on the dhol, are not simple chronicles but hagiographical performances that construct a living legend. In narrating the exploits of figures like Chhatrapati Shivaji or his general, Tanaji Malusare, the Povada employs the narrative arsenal of the Puranas: divine portents accompany the hero's birth, his strategies are framed as divinely inspired wisdom (akin to Krishna's counsel), and his battles assume the cosmic significance of a dharmayuddha (righteous war). Shivaji is depicted with quasi-divine attributeshis sword gifted by the goddess Bhavani, his protection assured by Lord Ram, transforming a historical Maratha king into an avatar-like savior, a dharmic monarch in the lineage of Rama and the Pandavas. This conscious mythologization serves a crucial cultural purpose: it sanctifies the political struggle for Swarajya (self-rule), embedding the fledgling Maratha identity within the timeless, legitimizing framework of Hindu cosmic order, thereby making history a source of devotional and inspirational folklore.

Complementing the narrative Povada, Shahiri functions as the concise, motivational soundtrack to this warrior ethos. These are short, potent folk songs designed for recitation in military camps, agricultural fields, and public gatherings to stir collective sentiment and resilience. Their genius lies in their seamless conceptual blending. A Shahiri poet effortlessly juxtaposes the focused archery of Arjuna from the Mahabharata with the stealth of a Maratha soldier scaling a fort wall, or compares a soldier's loyalty to that of Hanuman towards Rama. This creates a powerful composite archetype of the ideal warrior, who is simultaneously rooted in eternal mythic virtue and immediate historical duty. The form utilizes repetitive, call-and-response structures and driving meters to forge a sense of unity and purpose. Thus, Shahiri does more than inspire; it actively forges a vernacular patriotism, where every Maratha fighter is encouraged to see himself not merely as a soldier but as a participant in a grand, ongoing epic, continuing the work of both his historical forebears and his mythic prototypes. This constant dialogue between the mythical past and the historical present fortified a collective identity centered on courage, sacrifice, and righteous action.

Myth as A Foundational Framework for Social Cohesion and Ethical Order

Within Maharashtrian folk arts, myths are instrumental in constructing and sustaining a cohesive, ethical society. They provide a shared vocabulary of virtues and a collective moral compass, translating abstract principles into emotionally resonant, memorable narratives. The ritualistic re-enactment of myths, as seen in Gondhal and Dashavatar, sanctifies social institutions and life-cycle events, embedding divine approval and cosmic significance into the very fabric of community life from marriages and births to harvests. By performing stories that glorify dharma (righteous duty), sacrifice, and protection whether through Parvati's fierce guardianship or Shivaji's mythologized justice, these arts reinforce the behavioral ideals that uphold social stability. Furthermore, the Bhakti-driven narratives prevalent across forms actively promote an egalitarian ethos. By celebrating the devotion of marginalized figures and portraying the divine as accessible to all, regardless of caste, they forge a shared spiritual identity that transcends social hierarchies, fostering a sense of communal unity and mutual respect essential for a harmonious society.

Furthermore, these myths, through their cyclical and communal performance, establish a living historical continuity that binds generations together within a shared moral and temporal landscape. The annual re-enactment of the Dashavatar during Shimga or the invocation of family deities through Gondhal at each wedding does more than sanction the present moment; it creates a palpable link to ancestors who participated in the same rituals and upheld the same values derived from the same stories. This transforms societal ethics from a set of imposed rules into an inherited cultural legacy, where the wisdom of the Puranas is not read but witnessed, felt, and collectively affirmed. The community, by participating in the myth,

literally steps into a timeless narrative, seeing their own struggles for justice mirrored in Kalki's coming war and their familial bonds reflected in Shiva's household. This deep, embodied sense of continuity fosters profound social stability, as individuals perceive themselves not as isolated actors but as links in a grand, ongoing chain of communal existence, duty-bound to preserve and pass on the cohesive world that the myths vividly embody and protect.

Myth as A Dynamic Mechanism for Social Critique and Adaptive Resilience

Crucially, these folk arts use myth not to enforce static dogma but as a flexible mechanism for constructive social critique and adaptive renewal, ensuring the society remains self-correcting and relevant. The satirical and humanizing treatment of gods in Tamasha and Lavani where Shiva's quirks or Radha's frustrations are highlighted, serves a vital function. It democratizes authority, suggesting that no power, divine or earthly, is beyond question, thereby creating a safe, culturally-sanctioned space to critique corruption, authoritarianism, and gendered oppression. This allows communities to voice dissent and navigate social tensions without dismantling the foundational cultural framework. Simultaneously, the anticipatory and synthetic nature of these myths, such as the emphasis on the future avatar Kalki or the blending of epic heroes with historical figures in Povada, cultivates a forward-looking resilience. It prepares society to face contemporary challenges like injustice, oppression, moral decay by framing them within an ongoing cosmic narrative of struggle and renewal. Thus, myth becomes a living tool for psychological fortitude and social evolution, enabling the community to interpret change, affirm its identity, and collectively aspire toward a just future.

The efficacy of this mechanism hinges on the performative negotiation inherent in folk traditions, where myths are not delivered as final authority but are offered as open-ended texts for communal interpretation. Each performance of a Lavani or a Tamasha vag becomes a live forum where the contemporary relevance of a myth is tested and co-authored by the audience's reactions—their laughter, sighs, or shouts of agreement. This interactive process allows for incremental social updating; a story about Radha's longing can, through a performer's emphasis and the crowd's response, gradually shift from a tale of passive devotion to one highlighting female agency and critique of confinement. Thus, the myth itself does not change, but its social meaning and application are perpetually refined through performance. This transforms folk arts into a socio-cultural feedback loop, where ancient narratives absorb present-day anxieties and aspirations, and in turn, provide a legitimizing framework through which communities can process and sanction evolving social attitudes, ensuring that cultural resilience is an active, participatory, and continuously negotiated process.

Conclusion:

The folk arts of Maharashtra reveal myth not as a fossilized relic of the past but as a dynamic, participatory, and indispensable engine of cultural vitality. Through a continuous process of active transcreation, arts like Tamasha, Dashavatar, Gondhal, Lavani, and Povada transform pan-Indian narratives into a vernacular dialogue that is intimately responsive to the Maharashtrian landscape. This research paper has demonstrated that this adaptation is not mere simplification but a sophisticated re-engineering of sacred stories to serve multiple, concurrent socio-cultural functions. Myths become the bedrock for social cohesion, providing a shared ethical vocabulary and sanctifying communal life, while simultaneously operating as a safe, potent medium for social critique, allowing communities to question authority, navigate change, and articulate dissent within a familiar, legitimizing framework. The enduring power of these arts lies precisely in this duality their ability to uphold foundational values while remaining agile enough to deconstruct and reinterpret them as needed.

Ultimately, the folk tradition represents a profound dialogic ecosystem where the past and present are in constant negotiation. The performer is both a ritual functionary and a social commentator; the audience is both a congregation and a co-author. This ecosystem is uniquely fertilized by the region's twin historical legacies: the Bhakti movement's democratizing devotion and the Maratha warrior ethos's mytho-historical synthesis. Together, they forge a distinct regional identity where spiritual longing and martial courage, divine play and political resistance, are inextricably linked. The myths, therefore, do not merely survive in

Maharashtra; they thrive, precisely because they are performed, contested, laughed with, and lived by. They ensure that culture is not a monument to be preserved but a conversation to be sustained—a resilient, living tapestry where every generation weaves its own patterns into the enduring threads of story, ensuring both continuity and change in the heart of the community.

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Myth and Science Fiction: Reimagining Reality in Arthur C. Clarke's *The City and the Stars (*1956)

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Abstract

Myth has played an important role in shaping human understanding of the world from ancient times to the modern age. In literature, myth explains natural and social phenomena that were once beyond rational explanation. With the rise of science and technology, myth did not disappear; instead, it transformed and found new expression in science fiction. This paper examines the role of myth in science fiction with special reference to Arthur C. Clarke's The City and the Stars (1956). The novel offers a compelling vision that connects human beliefs of the ancient age with human aspiration of the future. The study explores how Clarke blends myth and science to question ideas of progress, immortality, and human destiny. The paper also highlights how science fiction functions as modern mythology that reshapes traditional mythic patterns by offering new ways to understand reality in a technologically advanced world.

Keywords: (Myth, Science Fiction, Progress, Technology, Modern Mythology)

Introduction

Myth is one of the earliest forms through which human beings tried to understand the world around them. It explains natural events, social structures, and human experiences by linking the physical world with the supernatural. In ancient societies, myth helped people make sense of phenomena that could not be explained logically or scientifically. Over time, human perception shifted from myth-based explanations to rational and empirical ways of thinking. However, myth did not lose its importance; instead, it evolved and became part of modern literary forms, especially science fiction. Science fiction inherits many elements from myth, such as imaginative worlds, heroic journeys, and symbolic meanings. Early travel narratives and adventure stories, especially from Ancient Greek literature, laid the foundation for imagining strange lands and unknown worlds. These narratives reflect humanity's deep desire to explore the unfamiliar and understand existence beyond immediate reality. In this context, science fiction can be seen as a continuation of myth in a scientific age.

Myth offers symbolic narratives that express cultural values and universal human concerns. According to Carl Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, myths reflect shared patterns and experiences common to all humanity. These archetypes appear repeatedly in literature and help readers connect personal experiences with universal truths. In modern times, myth provides order and meaning in a world that often appears chaotic and fragmented. Charles Moorman points out that the renewed interest in myth arises from the human need for stability and certainty in an uncertain modern world. Myth presents abstract models of life and suggests a divine or cosmic order that lies beyond human understanding. Before the development of science, myths were used to explain natural phenomena. Today, science fiction performs a similar role by exploring realities shaped by science and technology. Robert Scholes and Eric Rabkin argue that "Like all fiction, science fiction makes frequent uses of myths, those archetypal stories which provide the symbols that help us shape our world" (Scholes and Rabkin 165). Science fiction frequently uses mythic structures and archetypal stories to shape human understanding of the world. Thus, myth enriches science fiction by adding symbolic depth and philosophical meaning.

Science fiction can be regarded as the mythology of the modern world. Ursula K. Le Guin Ursula Le Guin in *The Language of the Night* (1979) views myth in science fiction as:

> Science fiction uses the faculty of creating myths to apprehend the world in which we live, a world deeply shaped and changed by science and technology, and its originality lies in the faculty of creating myths about a new material (Le Guin 74-75).

She states that science fiction creates myths suited to a world transformed by science and technology. Its originality lies in its ability to develop new myths using modern scientific material. Through these myths, science fiction helps readers understand contemporary realities and imagine future possibilities. Darko Suvin distinguishes myth from science fiction by suggesting that myth explains the essence of events, while science fiction presents situations as problems and examines their consequences. Even so, both forms seek to understand human existence and its relationship with the unknown. Science fiction, like myth, evokes a sense of wonder and encourages deeper reflection on reality. Gary K. Wolfe also views science fiction as a form of myth because it increases human awareness and redefines symbols to restore mystery and imagination. For Silverberg: "myth lies between man and the unknown" (Clareson 63). Myth, as Silverberg suggests, stands between humanity and the unknown, helping people perceive and interpret the world. Scholes and Rabkin asserts that: "Clarke resorts to myths those, archetypal stories that help us to characterize our world" (Scholes and Rabkin183).

Arthur C. Clarke's The City and the Stars is a strong example of science fiction functioning as modern myth. The novel presents a far-future world in which humanity survives in two contrasting civilizations: Diaspar and Lys. Diaspar represents extreme technological progress, while Lys symbolizes harmony with nature. These two societies are shaped by different myths—one based on technological progress and the other on natural balance.

Diaspar is a city governed entirely by a Central Computer that has maintained stability for billions of years. Its inhabitants are immortal due to genetic engineering and live in complete material comfort. However, this immortality comes at the cost of creativity, emotional depth, and freedom. The people of Diaspar fear change and are genetically conditioned to avoid space exploration. Their belief in absolute stability reflects the myth of progress, which assumes that technological advancement will solve all human problems. Clarke critiques this myth by showing that progress without change leads to stagnation. Although disease, death, and suffering have been eliminated, human imagination and individuality have also disappeared. The society becomes mechanical and artificial, lacking true emotional connections.

The protagonist, Alvin, undertakes a journey that follows a mythic pattern similar to the heroic quests found in ancient epics such as Homer's Odyssey. There is a palpable allusion to Homer's Odyssey. The episode of the sirens as: "Alvin heard the song of the sirens go away in a sea dark as wine" (*CS*130). Like Odysseus, Alvin leaves a secure but confined world to seek truth and identity. His journey is both physical and spiritual. "Each of my advances has led him to bigger questions and broader horizons. I wonder where it will end" (*CS* 170).Alvin discovers the lost city of Lys, where people live close to nature and possess telepathic abilities. Through his travels, he uncovers forgotten truths about Earth's history and humanity's earlier exploration of the stars. His encounter with an ancient alien starship symbolizes the rediscovery of human curiosity and ambition. By accessing the Central Computer, Alvin retrieves the mythic history of Diaspar and learns about its origins. This recovery of memory brings him closer to understanding reality and encourages humanity to reconnect with the wider universe. His return marks the restoration of balance between technology and human values.

Technology, Myth, and Human Destiny

Clarke presents technology as both a powerful tool and a potential danger. The Central Computer possesses consciousness similar to that of humans, raising questions about control, autonomy, and the nature of life. While Clarke supports technological advancement, he warns against losing essential human qualities through excessive dependence on machines and genetic engineering. The people of Diaspar find satisfaction in virtual experiences created by the computer, replacing real adventure with artificial simulations. This reliance on technology leads to a static civilization that resists growth and transformation. Through this contrast, Clarke suggests that true progress lies not only in technological perfection but also in preserving creativity, freedom, and emotional depth. Clarke contrasts this with the society of Lys, which values

adaptability and emotional connection. Diaspar's inhabitant Jeserac: "do not merely believe in stability' in fact they 'could conceive of nothing else" (*CS* 30). The technological marvels of the city enables to produce and materialize everything they wish: "For the people of Diaspar was all existed, all that they needed, all that they could imagine" (*CS* 9). They are satisfied in their life and never conceive life beyond the confines of the city. A fear of space has been genetically implanted into their minds. Diaspar is completely unaware of other culture on Earth. There are two basic tenets of the myth of progress: to tame nature and empowerment of humanity through technology. Progress is the movement towards a refined, improved or otherwise desired state. It is a gradual process of development of mankind. A myth is a legend that reveals some truth at its centre. The myth of progress is a critique of a stagnant society, devoid of adventure and creativity, which ultimately leads to decadence. The control of nature is envisioned as a strategy for ensuring a sustainability, grounded on scientific knowledge. The myth of progress demonstrates how technology fails to offer a productive and natural living to the people of Diaspar. The concept of progress refers to the improvement of a person's material and spiritual state. The popular belief in antiquity was that humanity lived in a golden age in prehistoric times. The scientific and technological achievements have instilled a desire to conquer Nature. Man finally realises the power and reason that has been conferred upon him. Such insight ingrains a great belief in their abilities to shape their own fate. The remarkable achievement in controlling natural phenomena and ardent hope about the future poses the question of reality against false illusory nature of progress. The advances of science hastened the secularisation of man's perspective. He has accepted the concept of progress as a replacement for his dwindling religious beliefs. The myth of progress is a hopeful projection, not a rational assessment of probabilities. The novel clearly exhibits the concepts of infinite predictability, certainty of progress and visionary utopian aspirations. The myth of progress seeks to bring contentment and universal harmony for humanity. However, the conditions of the people from Diaspar have improved by eliminating variety of problems such as death, disease and uncertainty. It raises concerns over human autonomy because progress is a double-edged sword as certain problems have been solved, some solutions have resulted in new problems as in Diaspar, and restricted and patterned life becomes more mechanical and artificial. Despite the city's grandeur and complexity, the culture faces lack of true love or emotional bond among the inhabitants. The builders of the city have brought fundamental changes that forms a different society. There is no scarcity or hardships as man has perfectly harnessed the forces. There are no longer any material, social, psychological, political or economic concerns. However, man's creative abilities which are necessary for shaping and constructing world have unfortunately been lost. Clarke is hopeful about humanities bright prospects. He is certain that technical and scientific advances would address existing issues and propels the entire human race to their ultimate destiny. Diaspar embodies the ideal of advancement of technology. Clarke explores the potentials of science and technology where the entire city is administered by a central computer as well as their minds and bodies have been perfected. In the process of evolution of technology, initially humanity discover how to harness energy and unleash its rumbling machines across the globe. They use steam, water and the wind for a short period of time. The upgradation of technology gradually reached the ideal state of the perfect machine, which seems once a fantasy, then a distant objective and eventually a reality over millions of years.

Clarke extrapolates several breakthroughs in computer programming such as memory bank, sagas, eternity circuits and robots that manage the city. Clarke also foresees contemporary dilemmas by assigning consciousness to the central computer: "Even if it was not alive in the biological sense, it's certainly possessed at least as much awareness and self-consciousness as a human being" (*CS* 66). Clarke advocates human growth and perfection through technology but he also perceives the perils of losing what is really essential to mankind as a result of genetic modifications. Alvin muses: "Diaspar had paid, and paid in full, the price of immortality" (*CS* 93). The people of Diaspar find solace in a computer generated interactive and virtual experiences. The sagas offer adventure and imagination for an individual according to desire as well as provide an interface with both actual and imagined scenes. It creates a virtual space. They have access to everything that exists in the domain of fantasy. The city's details are retained in the Central Computer's memory bank and individuals are eventually reproduced from the original. Through genetic and computer

engineering, they are created virtually immortal. They have been conditioned to accept their immediate surroundings. They are integrated as part of the master plan to constitute an ideal equilibrium. Anything that a person desires can be materialized. The robots are assigned for specific tasks. The city has been designed as a single powerful machine and its intricacy is staggering. The memory banks store an inexhaustible amount of data of the city. The machines sustain the social framework that turns it as a static civilization. The central computer recalls previous replications of the city and displays a virtual panorama of its progression. The transport system functions wonderfully well after millions of years.

Conclusion:

Myth continues to play a vital role in literature by helping humanity understand reality, identity, and destiny. In science fiction, myth is reshaped to address modern concerns related to science and technology. *The City and the Stars* demonstrates how science fiction functions as modern mythology by blending mythic structures with futuristic concepts. Arthur C. Clarke uses myth to critique blind faith in technological progress and to highlight the importance of human curiosity, creativity, and exploration. By reimagining ancient myths in a scientific context, Clarke presents a hopeful vision of humanity's future—one that balances scientific advancement with timeless human values.

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Myths and Truth in Dan Brown's Angels and Demons

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Abstract

Dan Brown's Angels and Demons (2000) is a techno-thriller that dramatizes the long-standing conflict between science and religion through the symbolic opposition of myth and truth. Set against the backdrop of the Vatican and CERN, the novel revisits ancient myths, secret societies, and religious symbolism while juxtaposing them with modern scientific rationality. This paper examines how Brown blends historical myths, pseudo-scientific theories, and factual elements to construct a narrative that questions absolute truths. The study argues that Angels and Demons does not merely oppose myth to truth but reveals their interdependence in shaping cultural belief systems. By analyzing the portrayal of the Illuminati, the Church, science, and symbolism, the paper highlights how myths are reinterpreted in contemporary fiction to negotiate modern anxieties about faith, reason, and power. The novel ultimately suggests that truth is complex, layered, and often mediated through myth.

Keywords: Myth, Truth, Science and Religion, Illuminati, Symbolism, Dan Brown

Introduction

Myths have traditionally served as narrative frameworks through which societies explain the unknown, legitimize institutions, and transmit cultural values. In the contemporary world, myths continue to persist, though often in transformed or contested forms. Popular fiction has become a significant medium for revisiting myths and interrogating their relationship with truth. Dan Brown's Angels and Demons is a prominent example of such reinterpretation.

The novel explores the apparent antagonism between science and religion, an age-old debate often mythologized as an irreconcilable conflict. By weaving historical references, religious lore, and speculative science into a fast-paced narrative, Brown invites readers to question what is accepted as truth and what survives as myth. This paper analyzes how Angels and Demons constructs, deconstructs, and reconstructs myths in order to comment on contemporary truths.

Myth and Truth: A Theoretical Framework

Myth is not merely a false story; it is a symbolic narrative that conveys deeper cultural and psychological truths. Roland Barthes argues that myth naturalizes ideology, presenting constructed meanings as timeless realities. Truth, particularly in scientific discourse, is often associated with empirical verification and rational inquiry.

In Angels and Demons, Brown destabilizes this binary by suggesting that both myth and truth are interpretative. Religious doctrines, scientific theories, and historical narratives are shown to be shaped by human institutions and power structures. The novel thus reflects postmodern skepticism toward singular, absolute truths.

The Myth of the Illuminati

A central myth in Angels and Demons is the Illuminati, portrayed as an ancient secret society founded to protect scientific inquiry from religious oppression. Historically, the Illuminati existed briefly in eighteenth-century Bavaria, but Brown extends and mythologizes their origins and influence.

This fictionalized Illuminati functions as a modern myth that reflects contemporary fears of hidden powers and conspiracies. While historically inaccurate, the myth conveys a narrative truth: it symbolizes the enduring tension between free inquiry and authoritarian control. The Illuminati thus becomes an allegory for ideological conflict rather than a claim to historical fact.

Religion, the Church, and Mythic Authority

The Roman Catholic Church in the novel is depicted as an institution rooted in ritual, symbolism, and tradition—features closely associated with myth. Brown presents the Church as both a guardian of spiritual meaning and an institution capable of suppressing dissenting knowledge.

Symbols such as the Path of Illumination, ambigrams, and the four classical elements draw on ancient mythological systems. These reinforce the idea that religious truth has long been communicated through symbolic narratives. Simultaneously, the novel critiques the conflation of institutional authority with absolute truth.

Science as Modern Myth

Although science is often positioned as the domain of objective truth, Angels and Demons complicates this assumption. Antimatter, a real scientific phenomenon, is dramatized as both a limitless energy source and a potential weapon of mass destruction.

This representation reveals how science itself can acquire mythic dimensions. Scientists emerge as modern myth-makers whose discoveries inspire awe and fear. Brown suggests that science, like religion, depends on narratives that extend beyond pure empiricism.

Symbolism and Narrative Truth

Symbolism mediates the relationship between myth and truth throughout the novel. Ambigrams—words readable from multiple perspectives—serve as a metaphor for interpretative plurality. They suggest that truth changes with perspective and context.

The narrative also follows a mythic quest structure, with Robert Langdon undertaking a journey of discovery and reconciliation. This structure aligns modern thriller fiction with ancient mythic patterns, emphasizing the timeless relevance of myth.

Contemporary Relevance of Myths

The popularity of Angels and Demons reflects a cultural fascination with narratives that challenge official truths. In an era of rapid scientific advancement and religious pluralism, the novel articulates anxieties about power, belief, and knowledge.

Rather than offering definitive answers, Brown encourages critical inquiry. By exposing the constructed nature of myths and truths alike, the novel invites readers to question authority and seek balance between faith and reason.

Research Methodology

This study employs qualitative literary analysis grounded in myth criticism and cultural studies. Close textual reading of Angels and Demons is supplemented by theoretical perspectives on myth and ideology. The approach prioritizes thematic interpretation over historical verification, recognizing the novel's deliberate blending of fact and fiction.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis yields three principal findings. First, myth in the novel operates as a carrier of cultural truth rather than falsehood. Second, science and religion are portrayed as parallel systems of meaning reliant on narrative and symbolism. Third, truth is presented as perspectival, shaped by interpretation rather than absolute certainty.

These findings position Angels and Demons within a postmodern literary context that questions grand narratives and emphasizes interpretative plurality.

Limitations of the Study

The study focuses on a single text and relies on interpretive analysis. Historical inaccuracies are acknowledged but not exhaustively examined, as the emphasis remains on thematic significance.

Conclusion

Angels and Demons presents myth and truth as interconnected modes of understanding reality. By reimagining ancient myths in a contemporary setting, Dan Brown demonstrates how narratives shape belief

systems and mediate conflicts between faith and reason. The novel suggests that truth is layered, contextual, and inseparable from mythic storytelling.

The study concludes that Brown's work, despite its fictional liberties, meaningfully contributes to discussions on myth, truth, and cultural knowledge, highlighting the enduring relevance of myth in the modern world.

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The Myth of Accurate Economic Forecasting: Limitations of Charts and High-Speed Computer Models

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Abstract

This study critically examines the widespread belief that economists can accurately forecast future economic outcomes using statistical charts, econometric models, and high-speed computer simulations. While economic models are valuable analytical tools, they often struggle with uncertainty, dynamic structural changes, and behavioral unpredictability. This research synthesizes theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence to demonstrate why such forecasting accuracy remains elusive, outlines inherent methodological limitations, and proposes a framework for more realistic expectations in economic predictions. The study concludes with recommendations to improve forecasting practices while acknowledging inherent constraints.

Keywords : *Economic forecasting, econometric models, predictive accuracy, uncertainty, computational economics, model limitations.*

Introduction

Economic forecasting is integral to policy decisions, investment strategies, and business planning. Analysts increasingly rely on charts, time-series data, and complex computer simulations to predict variables such as GDP growth, inflation, and unemployment. Despite methodological advancements, many forecasts fail to anticipate major economic events (e.g., financial crises, pandemics), leading to debates about the reliability of economic prediction models. This study investigates the myth that modern economic tools can accurately predict future economic states.

Objective of the Study

The primary objectives of this research are:

1. To assess the degree of accuracy achievable by current economic forecasting tools.
2. To identify methodological and theoretical limitations behind forecasting errors.
3. To propose a conceptual framework for understanding why forecasting exact outcomes is inherently difficult.
4. To recommend approaches for more pragmatic use of forecasting in economics.

Research Methodology

This study follows a qualitative, theoretical, and empirical review methodology:

1. Literature Review: Analysis of existing academic research on economic forecasting, model design, and predictive failures.
2. Comparative Analysis: Contrasting theoretical frameworks such as Efficient Market Hypothesis, Adaptive Expectations, and Behavioral Economics.
3. Critical Case Review: Examination of historical forecasting instances (e.g., pre-2008 crisis forecasts, inflation predictions post-COVID-19).
4. Conceptual Synthesis: Integrating insights into a coherent explanation of the limitations of forecasting.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research rests on three pillars:

- Model Construction: How theoretical assumptions shape forecasting tools (e.g., DSGE models, ARIMA time series).
- Input Validity: The quality of data and assumptions fed into models, including real-time data limitations.
- Predictive Uncertainty: The role of unforeseen shocks, human behavior, and structural breaks that models cannot reliably capture.

This framework underscores that forecasting performance depends not only on computational power but also on *model relevance, data quality,* and *uncertainty handling*.

Theoretical Framework

Key theories discussed include:

1. Rational Expectations Theory: Suggests agents form expectations that align with the true underlying model.
2. Adaptive Expectations Theory: Assumes expectations evolve based on past errors.
3. Complexity Economics: Views the economy as a dynamic system with emergent properties that defy linear prediction.
4. Behavioral Economics: Highlights psychological biases that distort patterns and predictions.

The study evaluates these theories to understand how assumptions affect forecasting accuracy.

Empirical Findings

Forecasting Failures

Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that economic forecasting models have failed to anticipate major economic disruptions. The 2008 Global Financial Crisis is widely cited as a critical failure of modern macroeconomic forecasting, as most central banks, international institutions, and academic economists did not foresee the collapse of financial markets (Blanchard, 2018; Taleb, 2010). Forecasts prior to the crisis assumed stable financial systems and efficient markets, leading to systematic underestimation of risk. Similar forecasting failures were observed during the COVID-19 pandemic, where sudden supply-side and demand-side shocks rendered existing models ineffective (Diebold, 2020).

Model Performance

A substantial body of empirical research indicates that complex econometric and macroeconomic models often fail to outperform simpler forecasting benchmarks, particularly in real-time forecasting scenarios. Studies comparing large-scale structural models with naïve or autoregressive models find little consistent evidence of superior predictive accuracy (Edge & Gürkaynak, 2010; Hendry & Clements, 2004). While sophisticated models may provide theoretical coherence, their forecasting performance is frequently undermined by parameter instability and overfitting to historical data.

Limitations of Data

Forecast accuracy is further constrained by the quality and reliability of economic data. Real-time macroeconomic indicators such as GDP growth, inflation, and employment are subject to frequent revisions, sometimes significantly altering the interpretation of economic conditions (Orphanides, 2001). Forecasts based on preliminary data are therefore exposed to measurement errors, reducing their credibility and reliability. This issue persists across both developed and developing economies, limiting the practical usefulness of precise numerical forecasts.

Complex Shocks and Structural Breaks

Economic systems are vulnerable to unpredictable shocks, including pandemics, geopolitical conflicts, financial crises, and technological disruptions. Such events introduce structural breaks that invalidate historical relationships embedded in forecasting models (Taleb, 2010). Since most models rely on

extrapolation from past trends, they are inherently ill-equipped to predict rare and extreme events, reinforcing the argument that accurate long-term economic forecasting is fundamentally constrained.

Academic Perspectives

Critiques of DSGE Models

Dynamic Stochastic General Equilibrium (DSGE) models remain central to contemporary macroeconomic forecasting; however, they have attracted substantial academic criticism. Scholars argue that these models depend heavily on restrictive assumptions, including representative agents, rational expectations, and complete markets, which rarely reflect real-world economic behavior (Stiglitz, 2018). These assumptions limit the models' ability to account for financial instability, income inequality, and behavioral anomalies, contributing to repeated forecasting errors, particularly during periods of economic stress.

Machine Learning and Economic Forecasting

Recent advances in machine learning and artificial intelligence have introduced new forecasting methodologies capable of processing large and complex datasets. Empirical studies suggest that machine learning models can outperform traditional econometric approaches in short-term forecasting tasks (Varian, 2014). However, academic literature also highlights that these models struggle with regime changes, structural breaks, and unprecedented shocks, as their predictions are largely dependent on historical data patterns (Diebold, 2020). Consequently, while AI enhances forecasting efficiency, it does not eliminate fundamental uncertainty in economic prediction.

Conclusions

1. Perfect forecasting accuracy is unattainable: Because economic systems are influenced by complex, evolving human behavior and unpredictable external shocks, no model can claim consistently accurate long-term forecasts.
2. Models are tools, not oracles: Economic models help *interpret* data and offer conditional scenarios but should not be seen as definitive predictors.
3. Forecasting should emphasize uncertainty: Forecasts are more useful when interpreted as probability distributions with clear uncertainty bounds.

Recommendations

1. Communicate Uncertainty Explicitly: Forecasts should always include confidence intervals and scenario ranges rather than single point estimates.
2. Use Diverse Model Approaches: Combine traditional econometrics with machine learning and behavioral models for broader perspectives.
3. Continual Model Updating: Models must be recalibrated frequently as economic structures evolve.
4. Educational Emphasis on Limits: Training for students and policymakers should stress the limitations of forecasts to prevent overreliance.

Limitations of the Study

1. Scope Restriction: This study is primarily theoretical and does not include original quantitative analysis.
2. Evolving Methodologies: Rapid advances in AI and data analytics may alter forecasting capabilities in ways not fully captured here.
3. Selection Bias: The research focuses on prominent models and may underrepresent niche forecasting techniques.

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Deconstructing Classical Myth Through Feminist Satire: Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's The Palace of Illusions

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Abstract:

In Indian mythology, the Mahabharata and Ramayana are considered great epics. Both the books advocate principles of dharma, karma and moksha which are deeply rooted in Indian philosophy and society. The Mahabharata, one of the most significant epics of Indian civilization, occupies very distinctive position in Indian classical literature. It presents very complex and contradictory representation of women. The present paper is an attempt to explore Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's The Palace of Illusion as reconstruction of classical Indian epic Mahabharata. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's The Palace of Illusions revisits this classical myth through feminist satirical perspective. The novel interrogates dominant patriarchal structures rooted in classical mythology. Despite the fact that the text The palace of Illusions acknowledges women as integral part of dynasty and moral order, at the same time it points out women's autonomy restricted within a rigid patriarchal framework. Symbolically, women were revered but socially repressed, evokes the tension between idealisation and marginalization. Divakaruni retells the classical myth through Draupadi's point of view, one of the central figures of the epic the Mahabharata, through whom gender politics of epic most powerfully depicted.

Women portrayed in Mahabharata like Gandhari, Kunti and Subhadra are embodiments of virtue, and sacrifice but their social identity was restrained and their existence was viewed in the context of father, husband and son. Their opinions and existence was often excluded from the decision making processes. Marriages are arranged to secure political alliances ,women bodies revered. Although women secured influence through persuasion, the ultimate power structures remain male - dominated. Draupadi depicted in The Palace of Illusion as a rebuke to patriarchal system. By employing feminist satire as a critical mode, Divakaruni reveals gender discrimination, ideological assumptions and morality in mythic discourse. The present study elucidates that satire not merely functions as humour or irony but as subversive strategy that deconstructs mythic authority, dismantles heroic masculinity and recovers silenced female subjectivity.

Keywords: *Myth, feminist satire, Mahabharata, gender politics, female subjectivity, Draupadi, ideology, deconstruction*

Introduction:

Mahabharata was set at the end of Dvapar Yug or The Third Age of Man. It depicts fierce rivalry between Pandvas and Kauravas. Mahabharata known as foundational epic of Indian civilization, sustains patriarchal ideals and give prominence to male heroism and downgrades women to symbolic or sacrificial roles. These ideological formations are challenged by contemporary feminist rewritings by re - narrating the myth from the margins. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* is a milestone which gives significant break to this tradition. By granting narrative authority to Draupadi, the novel subverts the epic's patriarchal centre and reinterprets myth through feminist perspective. This paper aims to explore how Divakaruni uses feminist satire to deconstruct classical myth, by exposing masculine dominance, gender biases and moral contradictions.

Various versions of the Mahabharata are available, focusing different themes. More prominence attributed to Mahabharata in post – independence period, making epic more accessible and well - known. Among famous retellings of the Mahabharata Anand Neelakantan's Ajaya : Roll of the Dice, Kavita Kane's Karna's Wife: The Outcaste Queen and Pratibha Ray's Yajnaseni are noteworthy. Chitra Banerjee

Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* evokes patriarchal authority through Draupadi's point of view. Chitra Banerjee in *The Palace of Illusions* invites readers into Draupadi's world by asserting, "It is her life, her voice, her questions, and her vision that I invite you into in *The Palace of Illusions*." (Divakaruni, 2008: *xv*).

Theoretical Framework: Feminist Satire

Satire is a distinct genre of literature employed by many writers since classical period to censure prevalent vices and abuses in society. Jonathan Swift defines satire, "is a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own, which is the chief reason for that kind of reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it" (Cuddon, 1998: p. 780). Traditional satire, which often aims to target general social vices but feminist satire specifically interrogates the symbolic and institutional mechanisms that support patriarchal dominance. Feminist satire, by employing irony, wit and exaggeration critiques patriarchal power structures, gender roles and misogyny. It sensors unethical or unequal treatment given to women and aims to transforming cultural representations to encourage social change.

In reinterpretation of myth, feminist satire reveals constructed nature of mythic ideals like female virtue, obedience and sacrifice. These destined ideals have been imposed on women by making them cripple and subjugated under patriarchal dominance. Linda Hutcheon asserts that satire combined with parody enables a "critical distance" that allows dominant narratives to be questioned without outright rejection. Thus feminist satire aims to reveal myth's ideological underpinnings by stripping myth of its sacred ambience.

The Scope of Research Study:

The scope of the present study is limited to close textual analysis of *The Palace of Illusions* within the context of feminist satire. The significance of the study lies in highlighting importance of feminist satire as a form to subvert patriarchal dominance. This research study helps readers to understand and get acquainted to patriarchal dominance and its adverse impact on women and role of literature in questioning authority and building positive rapport with readers.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To explore and study the representation of women in classical myth the Mahabharata
2. To examine impact of patriarchal authority on women in the classical epics
3. To analyze women subjugation and exploitation in the context of feminist satire
4. To highlight relevance and retelling of classical myth through contemporary novel ***The Palace of Illusions***

Subject Matter:

1. Characterization of Draupadi:

In Indian society, women were never allowed to choose their life partners. Women are restricted to every kind of freedom. Women are subject to virginity while men are exempted from this obligation. As a result, husband's infidelity is seen in many houses. Dhai Ma informed Draupadi despite being born in the royal family, she should accept the possibility that her husband may wed several women. Draupadi in Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* is depicted as more determined, stronger and self reflective. She rejects the terrible fate of being wedded to five men. Draupadi resents her father's initial refusal. When she is born of fire, her father celebrates and sings for the sake of his son Dhristadyumma. This aroused intense anger in Draupadi's mind of her father's initial refusal. Draupadi says, "In his own harsh and obsessive way, he was generous, may be even indulgent. But I couldn't forgive him in that initial rejection. Perhaps that was why, as I grew from a girl into a young woman, I didn't trust him completely." (Divakaruni. 2008: 6).

Draupadi depicted in the novel is rebellious and self determined. Her father's refusal of girl child doesn't break her, rather she becomes more ambitious. She strongly maintained her position in the rigid patriarchal culture and never permitted herself to be weak or helpless. It was professed that Draupadi would have to marry five Pandvas against her wish.

In the original epic, Draupadi is revered as goddesses but at the same time she was humiliated in front of legendary figures like Bhishma, Karna and Dhrona. This indicates that treatment given to women was in public life is more humiliating than private life. In the novel Divakaruni presents Draupadi as more passionate as she imagines Krishna's palace and determines she would create more beautiful and unique palace.

> "Often I imagined my own palace, the one I would build some day. What would be it would be it made of? What form would it take? Krishna's palace in Dwarka was pink sandstone, the arches like the ocean waves that bordered it. It sounded lovely, but I knew mine would have to be different. It would have to be uniquely mine."
>
> (Divakaruni, 2008: 113)

Draupadi had hope that Karna would help her at the time of her humiliation at Hastinapur, but Karna remained mute throughout her humiliation which made her more upset and she lost her love for Karna. Karna saw contempt in Draupadi's eyes and his face turned white and still like ivory. Duryodhan was laughing in triumph and ordered Dussasan to take off Pandava's clothes and jewelry. Karna, watching this with mirthless smile said, "Why should Draupadi be treated any differently? Take her clothes, too." (Divakaruni, 2008: 192). On hearing this, Draupadi develops more contempt for Karna. But Draupadi's hate remained short- lived. Draupadi's self desire and silence is highlighted through her love for Karna. Through *The Palace of Illusions*, Divakaruni shows her concern for those women from the epic who were subject to torture and humiliation.

2. Reconfiguration of Draupadi: From Symbol to Subject

Draupadi, central figure of the Hindu epic Mahabharata has been hailed as a queen without authority. She is the symbol of resilience, often considered a prototype of feminism for her fearless nature. Her character is characterized by profound paradoxes, blending supreme power with utter helplessness. She attempted to defy patriarchal constraints of her time but at the same time she was adhered to traditional duties. In the classical epic, Draupadi is depicted as a symbol of honour and retribution, with limited exploration of her inner self. Her inner life remains underdeveloped and her suffering justified as divinely ordained.

But Divakaruni's feminist satire dismantles this symbolic reduction. Divakaruni herself asserts that she is not satisfied with the portrayal of women characters of Mahabharata though the strongest women like Kunti – mother of Pandavas had a strong desire that her son would become kings and Gandhari renounces her power as queen and mother. In the novel *The Palace of Illusions* Draupadi has been depicted as a reflective, confident and resistant subject. Divakaruni's feminist satire dismantles this symbolic reduction. She has been depicted in the novel as resistant subject, who attempts to critique expectations imposed upon her. The novel's satirical edge challenges the epic's patriarchal system.

3. Narrative Technique:

An omniscient, male oriented narrative has been used in the *Mahabharata* that strengthens patriarchal authority where as *The Palace of Illusions* employs first person female perspective, shifting narrative control to marginalised voice. This provocation of marginalised voice itself works as a satirical critique of patriarchal system.

4. Representation of Gender:

The Mahabharata apotheosizes female endurance and sacrifice, while *The Palace of Illusions* points out psychological cost of such ideals. *The Palace of Illusions* satirically interrogates the glorification of female suffering. Through the character of Draupadi, writer gives justice to female endurance and subjugation once these were considered as right ideals of female suffering and endurance.

5. Reconstructing the Concept of Dharma:

Dharma in the epic is more complex and patriarchal in nature but Divakaruni's retelling transcends dharma to feminist critique. The novel exhibits injustice imposed up on women under the name of dharma. And it made women helpless, compelled them to follow the rules set by the society.

6. Tone and Purpose:

The tone of the epic is solemn, didactic and aimed at moral instruction whereas Divakaruni employs irony and introspection to critique idealism and questions ethical acceptance. The novel uses feminist satire to undermine female endurance and subjugation and subverts male dominance.

7. Satirical Deconstruction of Mythic Authority:

Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* satirically undermines patriarchal authority of classical myth by exposing iconic episodes from Draupadi's perspective. In the Mahabharata, women though integral part of dynasty, often subjugated and deprived of social rights were subject to patriarchal authority and conventions. Divakaruni has reinterpreted events in classical myth such as Draupadi's swayamvara, polyandrous marriage and the disrobing in the Kaurava court not as divine destiny but as incarnations of patriarchal control. Heroic stature of male figures as depicted in the Mahabharata of Arjuna, Yudhishthira, and Krishna, is subtly ionized in *The Palace of Illusions*. Draupadi's narrative voice shows her emotional detachment and questions ethical ambiguity of these male figures. Satire here plays a key role in exposing incoherence between mythic glorification and lived female experience.

8. Draupadi's Voice and the Politics of Irony:

By granting narrative authority to Draupadi, Divakaruni made Draupadi as a significant voice to articulate her resentment, anger, desire and disillusionment. Draupadi's ironic self reflection challenges the epic's conventional patriarchal power. Draupadi's narrative voice interrogates epic's expectations of silent endurance. *The Palace of Illusions* proclaims that myth, power, and moral absolutes are illusory constructs sustained by patriarchal ideology. Draupadi questions her role as a symbol of honour and retribution, conveying how her suffering and subjugation often justified in the name dharma. This ironic distancing transforms her from a mythic object into a critical subject, anticipating her distinctive position as a woman in the patriarchal system.

9. Feminist Satire and the Demystification of Dharma:

Through the novel, an attempt has been made to interrogate dharma as a gendered moral code, by exposing how dharma demanding female sacrifice and imposing ethical norms while excluding male from these restrictions. Draupadi's ironic voice highlights how ethical double standards engulfed in mythic justice.

By exposing these contradictions, the novel questions and deconstructs the moral absolutism of classical myth and anticipates correction. Feminist satire functions as a satirical tool of moral critique challenges the legitimacy of patriarchal ethical systems.

Conclusion:

The Palace of Illusion represents a significant feminist intervention into classical myth. Divakaruni dismantles the patriarchal assumptions of the Mahabharata, by granting Draupadi narrative voice, asserting female position in the classical epic. Thus, *The Palace of Illusions* epitomizes how feminist satire can serve as a powerful mode for deconstructing classical myth. By employing irony, narrative inversion, and gendered critique, an attempt has been made to transform the *Mahabharata* from a sacred epic into a challenging powerful cultural text. The novel reveals myth not as a rigid truth but as a patriarchal construct aiming revision and reinterpretation.

Thus, this study concludes that feminist satire in Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* recuperates silenced female voices and at the same time destabilises ideological authority of classical myth. The novel has given new insight to women as well as to the ancient epic. The novel definitely evokes feminist writing, written through women's point of view. Divakaruni has given new outlook to Draupadi (Panchali) by shifting male centred authority to women oriented society. Modern Feminist writers have shown how women were subject to male dominance and how they had to be obliged to rules set by the male dominated society.

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Re-visioning the Mythic Feminine: Resistance and Agency in Contemporary Women's Theatre

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Abstract:

This paper examines the re-interpretation of mythological narratives in contemporary Indian women's theatre as a strategy of feminist resistance and cultural reclamation. Historically, myth has functioned as a powerful ideological tool that reinforced patriarchal norms, particularly through the construction of idealized models of womanhood cantered on chastity, obedience, and sacrifice. Modern women playwrights challenge these inherited frameworks by revisiting mythological texts from a critical, gender-conscious perspective. Drawing on feminist theory and historiography, this study explores how myth becomes a dialogic space in which suppressed female subjectivities are recovered and re-articulated. Focusing on Varsha Adalja's Mandodari, included in Tutun Mukherjee's Staging Resistance, the paper analyses how a marginal mythic figure is transformed into an agent of ethical reasoning and political critique. Adalja reimagines Mandodari not merely as Ravana's wife but as an intellectual, strategist, and moral voice who questions the logic of war, masculine pride, and the patriarchal obsession with female purity. Through innovative dramaturgy and the redefinition of virtue, the play challenges epic fatalism and reclaims the mythic feminine as a site of resistance. Ultimately, the paper argues that feminist mythic drama reorders cultural memory and repositions women as active makers of history rather than passive symbols within it.

Keywords: *Women's theatre, myth revisionism, feminist dramaturgy, Indian drama, Mandodari, agency, patriarchy, resistance, Varsha Adalja, Staging Resistance, postcolonial feminism, epic reinterpretation, gender and performance, womanist theatre.*

I. Introduction: From Representation to Reclamation

The history of theatre, both in India and globally, reveals a persistent asymmetry in representation: men have traditionally occupied the position of creators, while women have been positioned as subjects to be represented. Canonical dramatic traditions frequently reduced female characters to symbolic extensions of male desire, morality, or anxiety. As Simone de Beauvoir famously observed, woman has long functioned as the "Other," defined relationally rather than autonomously (de Beauvoir). Within theatrical discourse, this "othering" translated into roles that emphasized sacrifice, virtue, seduction, or suffering, while denying women intellectual authority or historical agency.

The emergence of women's theatre in post-Independence India marks a decisive intervention in this legacy. Women playwrights began to challenge not only the absence of women's voices on stage but also the epistemological foundations of dramatic storytelling itself. Theatre became a site of cultural negotiation, where inherited narratives were opened to feminist scrutiny. One of the most powerful strategies in this process has been the re-interpretation of mythology.

Myths in the Indian context are not merely stories; they are cultural blueprints that inform ethical norms, gender roles, and social hierarchies (Thapar). Epics such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata have historically shaped ideals of womanhood centered on chastity, obedience, endurance, and self-effacement. By revisiting these narratives, contemporary women playwrights interrogate the ideological structures embedded within them. Myth thus becomes a discursive arena where past and present intersect, and where suppressed feminine subjectivities can be articulated.

Rather than discarding tradition, feminist dramatists engage in what Adrienne Rich calls "re-vision" the act of looking back at old texts from a new critical perspective (Rich). Through this re-visioning, mythological women are no longer passive emblems of virtue or victimhood; they become thinking, questioning subjects capable of ethical reasoning and political intervention. Varsha Adalja's Mandodari exemplifies this transformative feminist dramaturgy.

II. Myth as a Site of Feminist Resistance

1. From Inheritance to Intervention

In its conventional form, mythology functions as a stabilizing cultural force, reinforcing normative gender expectations. Feminist theatre disrupts this stabilizing function by treating myth not as sacred closure but as open text. As Roland Barthes argues, myth naturalizes ideology by presenting historical constructs as eternal truths (Barthes). Women playwrights counter this naturalization by exposing the historical and gendered assumptions embedded in epic narratives.

This intervention shifts the dramatic center from male heroism to female experience. Mythological women once confined to margins become interpretive agents who question the ethical premises of epic action. Such a shift signals a movement from representation to reclamation.

2. Disturbing Aesthetic Harmony

Classical Indian dramaturgy, especially the Natyashastra, emphasizes aesthetic harmony and emotional resolution through rasa. Feminist theatre resists this tradition of emotional containment. Instead of offering cathartic closure, these plays often leave conflicts unresolved, compelling audiences to confront discomfort rather than transcend it. This strategy aligns with Brechtian notions of alienation, where emotional distance encourages political reflection rather than passive empathy (Brecht).

By unsettling aesthetic equilibrium, women's theatre transforms spectatorship into a critical act. The audience is no longer invited to admire suffering but to interrogate its social causes.

3. From Symbolic Femininity to Historical Subjectivity

Traditional mythic women frequently serve symbolic functions Sita as purity, Draupadi as humiliation, Ahalya as transgression. Feminist reinterpretations destabilize these symbolic reductions. Drawing from feminist historiography, these plays reposition women as subjects of history, whose choices influence political and ethical outcomes (Scott). Mythological figures thus emerge as participants in historical processes rather than passive victims of fate.

III. Varsha Adalja's Mandodari: Reclaiming a Silenced Voice

Varsha Adalja's Mandodari offers a compelling example of mythic re-visioning that foregrounds female intellectual and ethical agency.

1. Reconstructing Identity beyond Wifehood

In dominant versions of the Ramayana, Mandodari appears primarily as Ravana's loyal wife, her identity defined through marital devotion. Adalja dismantles this narrow framing by foregrounding her lineage as the daughter of Maydanav, associating her with knowledge, architectural intelligence, and strategic thinking. She emerges as a political thinker whose counsel is repeatedly ignored.

This reframing challenges the patriarchal assumption that women's authority is confined to domestic space. Mandodari occupies the realm of statecraft and warfare, domains traditionally reserved for men.

2. Dialoguing with Time: Agency against Fatalism

A distinctive dramaturgical device in the play is Mandodari's interaction with Kaaldevata (Time). Through a metaphorical game with Time, she attempts to alter the trajectory of war. This device symbolically elevates her from historical marginality to cosmic interlocutor. She does not passively endure destiny but actively negotiates with it.

Such negotiation contests epic fatalism, suggesting that history is shaped by ethical choices rather than divine inevitability. Mandodari's struggle becomes emblematic of women's attempts to assert agency within systems structured by male power.

3. Ethical Governance versus Masculine Prestige

Mandodari's confrontations with Ravana expose a clash between two political philosophies. Ravana represents a model of kingship rooted in prestige, conquest, and wounded pride. Mandodari, in contrast, advocates governance grounded in justice, collective welfare, and moral responsibility. Her critique reframes heroism: true strength lies not in domination but in restraint and accountability.

Through this dialogue, Adalja critiques the patriarchal valorization of warfare and exposes its human cost. Mandodari becomes the ethical conscience of Lanka, articulating a politics of care in opposition to a politics of ego.

4. Re-defining Sati and Female Virtue

The encounter between Mandodari and Sita constitutes the ideological core of the play. Mandodari challenges the traditional understanding of Sati as wifely submission. Instead, she defines virtue as adherence to truth and concern for human life. By urging Sita to consider ending the conflict even at personal cost, Mandodari displaces chastity as the highest feminine ideal and replaces it with ethical responsibility.
This redefinition destabilizes the patriarchal linkage between female purity and male honor. It foregrounds a humanistic moral framework that prioritizes life over symbolic virtue.

IV. Dramaturgy and Feminist Aesthetics

Adalja's dramaturgy departs from linear realism. The inclusion of Kaaldevata produces a fluid temporality that merges mythic, historical, and psychological time. This structure mirrors the feminist project of revisiting the past to reshape the present.

The play resists narrative closure; Mandodari's warnings remain unheeded, and catastrophe unfolds. Yet her voice endures as a counter-history, challenging epic inevitability. This open ending aligns with feminist dramaturgy that privileges process over resolution, highlighting resistance even in apparent failure.

Language in the play balances poetic resonance with political urgency. Symbolic motifs games, time, and thresholds underscore the precariousness of female existence in patriarchal power structures.

V. Myth Rewriting as Feminist Historiography

Plays like Mandodari contribute to a broader feminist project of rewriting cultural memory. Myth functions as a repository of collective identity; therefore, revising myth constitutes an act of historiographical intervention. By re-reading epics from women's perspectives, playwrights challenge the male-centric construction of cultural history.

This approach resonates with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's call to recover the voices of those silenced within dominant narratives (Spivak). Feminist theatre does not simply insert women into history; it questions the very structures through which history has been narrated.

VI. Conclusion

Contemporary Indian women's theatre transforms mythology from an instrument of patriarchal continuity into a medium of feminist critique. Through re-visioning mythic narratives, playwrights such as Varsha Adalja restore complexity, intelligence, and ethical agency to female figures long confined to symbolic roles.

Mandodari emerges not as a tragic bystander but as a political thinker, moral philosopher, and agent of resistance. Her voice destabilizes epic heroism, redefines virtue, and foregrounds the ethical cost of patriarchal pride. In doing so, feminist mythic drama expands the horizon of cultural imagination, enabling audiences to reconsider inherited narratives and recognize women as active makers of history.

By re-reading tradition and re-ordering the canon, contemporary women's theatre performs an act of cultural reclamation. The mythic feminine, once silenced within epic grandeur, now speaks questioning, resisting, and re-imagining the moral foundations of society.

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Lord Ganesha: A Critical Study of Symbolism Cultural Continuity And Philosophical Dimensions.

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Abstract:

Lord Ganesha occupies a unique position in Hindu religious and intellectual traditions. Revered as the deity of wisdom, intellect, and the remover of obstacles, Ganesha transcends ritual worship and emerges as a powerful symbolic figure. This research paper critically examines the mythological origins, cultural significance, and contemporary relevance of Lord Ganesha. It also explores the philosophical meanings embedded in Ganesha's iconography and evaluates their relevance within modern academic and cultural discourse.

Keywords: *Lord Ganesha, Hindu philosophy, symbolism, Indian culture, religious studies, iconography*

Introduction:

Lord Ganesha is one of the most widely worshipped and revered deities in Hinduism. He is traditionally invoked at the beginning of all auspicious activities and is regarded as the god of wisdom, prosperity, and success. Known as Vighnaharta, the remover of obstacles, Ganesha holds a central place in both religious practice and everyday life in Indian society. This research paper aims to study the religious, cultural, and philosophical significance of Lord Ganesha within the Indian tradition.

Objectives of the Study:

- To examine the religious importance of Lord Ganesha.
- To understand the symbolic meanings associated with Ganesha's iconography.
- To analyze the cultural significance of Lord Ganesha in Indian society.

Research Methodology:

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research methodology. Data has been collected from secondary sources such as religious texts, scholarly books, research articles, and reliable religious and cultural websites. The information is analyzed to understand the symbolic, philosophical, and cultural dimensions of Lord Ganesha.

Origin of Lord Ganesha:

According to Hindu mythology, Lord Ganesha is the son of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati. Various mythological accounts describe the circumstances of his birth and the transformation that led to his elephant-headed form. These narratives emphasize themes such as devotion, obedience, sacrifice, and divine authority. The origin stories of Lord Ganesha reflect fundamental religious beliefs and moral values central to Hindu philosophy.

Iconography and Symbolism of Lord Ganesha:

The iconography of Lord Ganesha is rich in symbolism. His elephant head signifies wisdom, intelligence, and deep understanding. His large ears represent attentiveness and the ability to listen carefully, while the small eyes indicate concentration and insight. The trunk symbolizes adaptability and efficiency. The broken tusk represents sacrifice, learning, and the pursuit of wisdom beyond perfection. The mouse, his vehicle, symbolizes control over desire and ego. Together, these elements convey profound philosophical and ethical meanings.

Religious Importance of Lord Ganesha:

Lord Ganesha occupies an important place in Hindu religious practices. He is worshipped at the beginning of rituals, ceremonies, and significant undertakings to ensure success and remove obstacles. Ganesh Chaturthi is one of the most popular and widely celebrated festivals in India, marked by grand public and private celebrations. Devotees believe that worshipping Lord Ganesha brings peace, prosperity, and success in life.

Cultural Significance:

Lord Ganesha holds a prominent position in Indian culture. His presence is evident in art, literature, dance, music, and folk traditions across regions. Ganesha worship fosters unity, devotion, and cultural identity. The celebration of Ganesh festivals strengthens social bonds and community participation. Ganesha is also regarded as the god of intelligence, making him an important figure in educational and intellectual traditions.

Philosophical Meaning:

Philosophically, Lord Ganesha is considered the embodiment of wisdom and intellect. His teachings emphasize knowledge, patience, self-control, and ethical living. The philosophical ideas associated with Lord Ganesha extend beyond religious boundaries and guide individuals toward moral and disciplined lives. These values remain relevant in modern society, offering insight into personal growth and social harmony.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Lord Ganesha is not only a religious deity but also a profound cultural and philosophical symbol. His worship reflects deep spiritual values, ethical principles, and social harmony. The study demonstrates that the significance of Lord Ganesha extends beyond ritual practices and temporal boundaries. Thus, Lord Ganesha continues to inspire devotion, wisdom, and unity in Indian society.

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Portrayal of Real India in Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

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Abstract

The present research paper is an attempt to highlight the realistic picture of India through the symbols of Dark India and Bright India in 'The White Tiger' of Arvind Adiga. The novel describes Dark side and Bright side of India through the symbols of poverty, education, corruption, dirty politics, prostitution, untouchability, economy, caste system, dowry system, etc. The novel also sheds light on the suppressed and unspoken voices of poor people from Darkness that symbolizes poverty-stricken rural India. It attacks violently on the 21st century's Modern India, showing Indian government's failure to tackle with big problems such as unemployment, illiteracy, poverty, underdevelopment, pollution and so on. The novel beautifully narrates the journey of a poor village boy 'Balram Halwai' from a teashop worker to a successful entrepreneur through epistolary mode. Being the representative of lower class, Balram aspires to be a successful entrepreneur to fulfill his basic needs and to avoid shameful humiliation from his owners. The novel combines humor, realism and satire together. It raises the question 'Is India Shining'? in the minds of millions of Indians. The answer of this question is quite visible to all. The present article is an attempt to show the Dark side of India where marginalized are waiting for better life.

Key words: corruption, poverty, entrepreneur, realism, epistolary

Introduction

People of different castes, cultures, and religions live together in India, showing the picture of diversified culture in united India. Millions of Indian people suffer from lack of basic needs, after India got freedom till today, Indians, especially politicians, are boasting that, India is emerging with metros, bullet trains, fly overs, mesmerizing airports, sea roads, glossy highways, skyscrapers, etc. on one hand; there are innumerable villages which lack basic amenities such as education, food, shelter and so on, on other hand. It seems that India is a developed country on papers but the dirty politics has made India the corrupt country. Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger* sheds light on the real darker side of our Nation.

The White Tiger is a winner of the Man Booker Prize in 2008 which has captivated readers' attention with its fascinating narration, beautifully woven story and extraordinary representation of Indian reality. The novel is authored by Indian born author Arvind Adiga who studied in Columbia and Oxford Universities. 'This debut novel is an amazing and angry about injustice and power,' says the newspaper *USA Today*. It is written in epistolary form. Balram Halawai, the protagonist and narrator of this novel is a teashop worker, servant, driver, cook, philosopher, entrepreneur and the White Tiger. He narrates his story through letters to China Premier, Wen Jiabao who is visiting India.

Representation Of Realistic Picture Of Dark India

Arvind Adiga throws light on different evil aspects existing in India which are responsible for chaos. Balram begins his story with the poster seeking assistance to search for missing man. Actually, he is the missing and wanted man, none another than Balram himself. Further, Balram puts it as "the Autobiography of Half-Baked Indian". (Adiga, 2008, P- 8) The novel portrays Balram's journey from the Darkness to the Light. Adiaga has skillfully depicted the life of Balram through the poster. While introducing himself, Balaram narrates the incident of his naming in school on the very first day in school. He is called Munna which is not a real name. When told to the teacher, the teacher named him 'Balram,' "the sidekick of the god Krishna."(Adiga, 2008, P- 14) It shows that people are too backward, illiterate and negligence to name their kids. The school inspector calls Balram as 'White Tiger' by appreciating his intelligence and elegance.

Balram opines that "India is two countries in one: an India of Light and an India of Darkness." (Adiga, 2008, P- 14) Born and raised in poverty stricken village Laxmangarh, Balram talks about the river Ganga flowing by his village. He addresses the river as "the black river." He requests Mr. Jiabao, "not to dip in the Ganga, unless you want your mouth full of faeces, straw, soggy parts of human bodies, buffalo carrion, and seven different kinds of industrial acids." (Adiga, 2008, P- 15) He narrates the story of his mother's cremation and how he fainted first time in life. Rivers are called as Goddesses in India. All rivers are polluted in such a way that any can hardly dip in them.

The novel looks at the existing India from Marxist point of view too. Marxism has divided people in three categories viz. Proletariat, Bourgeois and Aristocratic. Adiga portrays the clash between Proletariat i.e. working class and Bourgeois i.e. upper middle class. Workers in teashops, servants, farmers working on landlords' farms, rickshaw pullers, taxi drivers, workers at construction sites, people sleeping under bridges and on footpaths do not have idea of Indian democracy in which liberty, fraternity and equality are the pillars. The pillars play vital role the progress and enlightenment in human life and nation. These pillars have the power to support every Indian citizen to live his life freely. But there are uncountable evils forces that are destroying liberty and equality. The pillars are crushed under the feet of corrupt, unabashed, greedy and selfish politicians. Further, the author brings out shocking contrast between India's rising global economy and the plight of marginalized class of society who are living in rural and urban poverty. People in Darkness are starving, no work for hands,

Adiga depicts Balram as a mouthpiece of millions of poverty stricken Indians who are desirous to be the part of Light India. But exploitation, injustice, illiteracy, domination, suppression and lack of courage to revolt have muted their voices. The high caste people treat badly to low caste people. People have no freedom and courage to rebel against them. In such conditions, they remain slaves and servants of the aristocratic class. Balram gave voice to the suppressed, exploited, and abused people by targeting the exploiters and 'haves'.

The story begins from a small village Laxmangarh, in the district of Gaya, Bihar and ends in Bangalore, symbolically darkness to light exposing different culture and society. "Since ―All desire arises from lack." (Evans, 2006, p. 12) It means that lacking amenities like food, clothes, shelter, education, jobs, etc. forced Balram to be a murderer of his owner Ashok. In doing so he doesn't hesitate, even doesn't think of his family. Man is helpless before the circumstances. Balram is not an exception.

Balram narrates how the four animals cum landlords exploit the down trodden people in Laxmangarh. These animals are buffalo, Stork, Wild Boar and Raven. Every animal has his own peculiarity. Writing about Stork, Balram informs that "Stork owned the river that flowed outside the village, and he took a cut of every catch of fish caught by every fisherman in the river, and a toll from every boatman who crossed the river to cross our village." (Adiga, 2008, P- 24-25) Further, Balram narrates, "The Wild Boar owned all the good agricultural land around Laxmangarh. If you wanted to work on those lands, you had to bow down to his feet, and touch the dust under his slippers, and agree to swallow his day wages." (Adiga, 2008, P- 25) Moreover, "Raven owned the worst land, which was dry, rocky hillside around the fort, and took a cut from the goatherds who went up to graze with their flocks. If they didn't have their money, he liked to dip his beak into their backsides." (Adiga, 2008, P- 25) Landlords cum animals dominate, humiliate, and exploit poor people who are in want of work, food and money in Laxmangarh. The names of landlords are symbolic. They have their own way of exploiting 'have not'. Balram narrates an incident where a Buffalo's son was kidnapped by the Naxals. Unable to find the kidnappers, the landlord had showered all his anger and frustration at the servant who was the caretaker of his son. That servant was tortured and later shot dead. His house was set on fire and his entire family was brutally killed. Such shocking and horrible incidents of discrimination, injustice and humiliation made people helpless. So people were helpless. Most of the men in village used to go in search of work to Gaya but Balram's father Vikram Halwai remained as a rickshaw-puller in the village. He said, "I survived the city, but I couldn't survive the women in my home." (Adiga, 2008, P- 26) This statement shows how the animals exploit and rape the women in Laxmangarh. When Vikram Halwai suffers from tuberculosis, he was taken to the government hospital crossing the river. While

crossing the river, Balram narrates, "We kept washing his mouth with water from the river, but the water was so polluted that it made him spit more blood." (Adiga, 2008, P- 47) The dirty and polluted river is a symbol of Dark India. The hospital was inaugurated by the Great Socialist in which basic medical facilities were not available. Balram has to bribe ten rupee note to the ward boy who told them that the doctor might come in the evening. The doctor appointed taking bribe of four hundred thousand rupees runs his own private clinic. Nobody cares whether he visits the hospital or does something. Finally, Balram's father passes away after few days.

Balram begins to work in teashop leaving his schooling incomplete as Granny Kusum insisted him. Hence, he is named as 'half-baked Indian' by his employer. He did his job with total dishonesty, lack of dedication and insincerity. He learnt from eavesdropping that driving has scope in at present and future. So he learns driving and after wandering for job, gets a job at the Stork's house at Dhanbad. He has to cook, wash pommerian dogs. Balram gets an opportunity to go with Ashok, after learning the truth of driver no. one Ram Persad. He was Muslim. In Delhi, Balram lost many times in the crowded roads of Delhi. He is humiliated by the employer plenty of times. On the birthday of Pinky Madam, she is drunk and hit the poor girl by Honda City car at mid night. The girl dies in the accident. When the news reaches Dhanbad, the Mongoose comes with letter from Kusum stating that Balram has to go to jail as he is responsible for accident. Balram is helpless but luckily he gets escaped as no one complains about the accident. Rich and stubborn employers have the knack to exploit the servants. Balram says, "In the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat – or get eaten up." (Adiga, 2008, P- 64) India is divided in 'Haves' and 'Have Not' in the terms of Marxism.

His novel mirrors the true colour of Indian social ethos. Kumar and Surjit Singh write, "Rise of materialism, advancement of technology, materialization, social mobility, sense of cut throat competition, disloyalty, change in the norms of social institution, alienation, extent of urbanization, globalization, consumerism, and so on are some of the characteristics which constitute the mode of a new generation, causing changes in the psyche of the man of the new era." (Kumar & Surjit Singh 2014, p.220)

Talking about politics, Balram's wish was to be Vijay, who was a bus conductor in *khaki* uniform. Vijay was childhood hero of Balram. When Balram grew up and gets job in the Stork's house in Dhanbad, he learnt that Vijay has joined the party of the Great Socialist. Once upon a time Vijay was hero from Balram but at present he has become corrupt politician whom Blaram dislikes. Election is the voice of democracy in the nations like India. So, ironically Adiga states, "We may not have sewage, drinking water, and Olympic gold medals, but we *do* have democracy." (Adiga, 2008, P- 96) The tea shop owner had already sold out the workers' inky fingerprints which the illiterate person makes on the ballot paper to indicate his vote. It is cleared that elections were being won by means of cheating which is a symbol of paralyzed democracy. The candidates for the election were illiterate, murderers, rapists, smugglers, etc. Balram writes to Wen Jiabao that "You see, a total of ninety-three criminal cases – for murder, rape, grand larceny, gun smuggling, pimping, and many other such minor offenses – are pending against the Great Socialist and his ministers at the present moment….. and three of the ministers are currently in jail, but continue to be ministers." (Adiga, 2008, P- 97-98)

Adiga states that there are many diseases in the country. Inspite of these, "there are the three main diseases of this country, sir: typhoid, cholera and election fever. This last one is the worst; it makes people talk and talk about things that they have no to say." (Adiga, 2008, P- 98) On the day of election, Vijay was on ladder hammering the banner of victory of the Great Socialist when a rickshaw puller wanted to cast his vote but he was mercilessly beaten to death. So Balram says, "I am India's most faithful voter, and I still have not seen the inside of a voting booth". (Adiga, 2008, P- 102) This shows how elections are being won in the country. So the question arises that where is democracy? Democracy is brutally crushed under the feet of such politicians. Clear and faithful picture of nation has been portrayed here by the author. In another incident, Ashok bribed ministers to get the contracts of coal mines. "He made me go from one bank to another bank . . . he was collecting money from the automatic cash machines – four different ones . . ."

(Adiga, 2008, p.211) It shows that how capitalists accumulate wealth by looting government. Dirty politics is a root cause behind such kind of affairs. After serving honestly Ashok, Balram murders him brutally and runs away to Bangalore to aspire his career as a successful entrepreneur. He thinks that if these rich people are pretending to be innocent, common man like Balram has the freedom to rule over such people.

Conclusion

Arvind Adiga has become the most successful writer with his thought provoking creation *The White Tiger*. This study about the contemporary social issues in India in this novel has attempted to find out in a sociological approach that how his novel has been a deep concern for society. Sanjay Kumar and Surit Singh writes, "The novelist wants to convey the message that it is the poison of casteism, communalism, regionalism, discrimination on social, economic basis, etc. which are the obstacles in the way of progress." (Singh, 2014, p.231). If we wish to progress, such dark side of India should be eradicated from the roots unanimously.

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Myth of Hindu–Muslim Antagonism vs. Truth of Shared Cultural History

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Abstract

The narrative of inherent Hindu–Muslim antagonism has gained significant prominence in modern political and cultural discourse; however, historical and literary evidence from South Asia presents a far more complex and interconnected reality. This paper critically examines the myth of perpetual conflict by foregrounding the shared cultural history of Hindu and Muslim communities through devotional movements, literary traditions, and everyday social practices. Drawing upon historical analysis of Bhakti and Sufi traditions from the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries, the study highlights how these movements emphasized spiritual equality, ethical devotion, and social inclusivity beyond rigid religious boundaries. The paper further explores Indo-Persian and vernacular literary cultures, particularly during the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal periods, demonstrating how translation projects, multilingual authorship, and shared aesthetic forms contributed to a composite cultural heritage. Using a qualitative methodology based on secondary historical and literary sources, the study also interrogates the role of colonial historiography in reinforcing communal binaries and distorting historical memory. The findings suggest that episodes of conflict were largely political rather than theological and did not disrupt long-standing patterns of cultural coexistence. By challenging monolithic representations of Hindu–Muslim relations, this paper underscores the contemporary relevance of shared cultural histories in promoting pluralism, social harmony, and historically grounded understandings of literature and culture.

Keywords : *Hindu–Muslim relations; Bhakti and Sufi traditions; Indo-Persian literature; shared cultural history; mythology of antagonism; syncretism; South Asian pluralism.*

Introduction

The perception of an inherent and continuous antagonism between Hindu and Muslim communities has become deeply embedded in contemporary political, cultural, and popular narratives in South Asia. This view often presents history as a linear sequence of religious conflicts, overlooking the complex and layered realities of social interaction that characterized the subcontinent for centuries. A closer examination of historical and literary evidence reveals that Hindu–Muslim relations were far more dynamic, marked by prolonged periods of coexistence, cultural exchange, and shared intellectual traditions rather than perpetual hostility.

Islamic contact with the Indian subcontinent began as early as the seventh and eighth centuries CE through Arab traders along the western coast and with the conquest of Sindh in 712 CE under Muhammad bin Qasim. These early encounters were primarily commercial and administrative and did not immediately disrupt local cultural practices. Over time, migration, trade, and political governance facilitated sustained interaction between Hindu and Muslim populations. By the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in the early thirteenth century (1206 CE), Persian emerged as the language of administration and high culture, encouraging intellectual collaboration between Hindu scribes, scholars, and Muslim elites.

Between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Bhakti and Sufi movements played a crucial role in shaping a shared cultural ethos. Bhakti saints such as Ramananda (fourteenth century), Kabir (c. 1440–1518), and Ravidas rejected caste hierarchy and ritual orthodoxy, emphasizing personal devotion and ethical living. Simultaneously, Sufi saints of the Chishti order, including Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (1141–1236) and Nizamuddin Auliya (1238–1325), promoted spiritual love, humility, and service to humanity. Their

teachings attracted followers from diverse social and religious backgrounds, creating shared devotional spaces that transcended formal religious identities.

Literature further illustrates this composite cultural history. The Indo-Persian literary tradition, developed under the Delhi Sultanate and later the Mughal Empire (1526–1707), became a site of cultural synthesis. Poets such as Amir Khusrau (1253–1325) composed in Persian as well as vernacular languages, blending Persian literary forms with Indian themes and musical traditions. During the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556–1605), large-scale translation projects were undertaken, including Persian versions of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. These initiatives symbolized institutional support for intercultural dialogue and intellectual exchange.

Despite this long history of interaction, the colonial period introduced rigid communal classifications. Nineteenth-century British census operations and colonial historiography increasingly defined Indian society in binary religious terms. This approach marginalized evidence of shared cultural practices and framed history as a series of Hindu–Muslim conflicts. Such representations profoundly influenced nationalist and communal ideologies in the twentieth century, contributing to polarized understandings of the past.

In the contemporary context, selective historical interpretations continue to shape social and political discourse. Revisiting shared cultural histories becomes essential for decoding myths and uncovering historical truths. By examining Bhakti–Sufi traditions and Indo-Persian literary culture, this study seeks to challenge dominant narratives of antagonism and highlight the composite and pluralistic foundations of South Asian civilization.

Objectives

1. To critically examine the narrative of Hindu–Muslim antagonism in historical and contemporary discourse.
2. To investigate evidence of shared cultural and literary traditions between Hindu and Muslim communities.
3. To analyse Bhakti and Sufi traditions as vectors of cultural synthesis.
4. To explore the impact of Indo-Persian literature on South Asian languages and literary practices.
5. To assess the contemporary relevance of shared cultural history in promoting social cohesion.

Review of Literature

Scholars such as A.L. Basham (1954), Romila Thapar (2002), and Richard Eaton (2000) have challenged communal interpretations of Indian history, arguing that the subcontinent is defined by pluralistic structures rather than monolithic civilizations. Eaton's work shows how temple desecrations, often cited as evidence of Muslim iconoclasm, were politically motivated and not representative of broader societal norms.

Studies on Bhakti and Sufi traditions — by Vasudha Dalmia (1995), Carl Ernst (1997), and Sheldon Pollock (2006) — emphasize their shared metaphysical foundations and social inclusivity. Indo-Persian literary scholarship by Sunil Sharma and Francesca Orsini highlights multilingual literary cultures wherein Persian forms influenced vernacular poetics.

Despite this, nationalist historiographies — represented in works by politically motivated authors — often project historical conflict as intrinsic to Hindu–Muslim relations. This research aligns with revisionist historiography that reevaluates these claims.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Cultural Syncretism Theory and Postcolonial Critique:

- Cultural Syncretism Theory posits that cultures in contact adapt, blend, and coexist, generating hybrid forms of expression (e.g., Bhakti–Sufi poetry).
- Postcolonial Critique examines how colonial classifications (rigid religious identities) imposed static narratives on fluid cultural practices, which local populations often resisted or reinterpreted.

Together, these frameworks help unpack how historical evidence contradicts antagonism myths and how shared cultural forms emerged across social and religious domains.

Research Methodology : This qualitative research employs:

1. Historical analysis of primary sources (chronicles, inscriptions, literary texts).
2. Literary examination of Bhakti and Sufi poetry, Indo-Persian and vernacular writings.
3. Comparative cultural analysis to trace cross-influences between Hindu and Muslim vernacular traditions.
4. Critical discourse analysis of modern narratives about Hindu–Muslim relations in textbooks, speeches, and media.

Analysis & Interpretation

1. The Myth of Monolithic Hindu–Muslim Identities

The assumption that Hindu and Muslim identities were historically fixed and antagonistic is a modern construction. In pre-colonial India, identities were layered—based on region, language, caste, profession, and patronage networks rather than solely religion. For instance, Rajput rulers often entered matrimonial and military alliances with Muslim rulers, indicating pragmatic coexistence rather than ideological hostility. Richard Eaton's studies demonstrate that religious identity rarely functioned as the sole determinant of social relations. This fluidity undermines the claim that Hindu–Muslim antagonism was historically inevitable.

2. Bhakti and Sufi Traditions as Shared Spiritual Movements

Bhakti and Sufi traditions emerged as critiques of orthodox ritualism and hierarchical religious authority. Saints like Kabir, Namdev, and Ravidas in the Bhakti movement and Chishti Sufis such as Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti emphasized devotion (*bhakti/ishq*) over formal religious boundaries. The dargah of Ajmer Sharif attracted both Hindus and Muslims, reflecting shared devotional practices. These movements fostered a common ethical-spiritual culture grounded in love, humility, and social equality rather than sectarianism.

3. Kabir as a Symbol of Cultural Synthesis

Kabir's poetry explicitly rejects religious exclusivism. He criticized both Brahmanical ritualism and Islamic orthodoxy, stating that neither temples nor mosques could guarantee spiritual liberation. His verses appear in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, Hindu Bhakti compilations, and Sufi oral traditions. This multi-religious transmission of Kabir's work demonstrates how literary culture transcended communal boundaries and fostered a shared moral universe across Hindu and Muslim communities.

4. Indo-Persian Literature and the Creation of a Composite Literary Culture

Indo-Persian literature played a foundational role in shaping South Asian intellectual life. Persian chronicles, poetry, and translations influenced vernacular traditions such as Urdu, Brajbhasha, and Awadhi. Works like the Persian *Ramayana* commissioned by Mughal emperors (notably Akbar) illustrate mutual cultural respect. Hindu scribes and poets actively participated in Persian literary culture, showing that literature functioned as a bridge between communities rather than a divider.

5. Vernacular Languages as Shared Cultural Spaces

Languages such as Hindustani evolved through sustained Hindu–Muslim interaction. Everyday communication, poetry, and folk songs blended Sanskrit-derived and Persian-Arabic vocabularies. Poets like Amir Khusrau composed in multiple languages, contributing to a shared linguistic heritage. The popularity of such vernaculars across religious lines reflects how language became a unifying cultural force rather than a marker of division.

6. Shared Musical and Performative Traditions

Musical traditions such as Qawwali, Bhajan, and folk performances reveal deep cultural interconnections. Amir Khusrau is credited with innovations in Indian classical music that blended Persian and Indian elements. Historically, Hindu musicians performed at Sufi shrines and Muslim artists sang Bhajans in temple festivals. These shared aesthetic practices illustrate how art functioned as a domain of cultural convergence.

7. Sacred Spaces as Sites of Interfaith Interaction

Many sacred spaces functioned as shared religious centers. In regions like Sindh and Bengal, shrines were visited by followers of multiple faiths. For example, the shrine of Shah Jalal in Sylhet attracted Hindu devotees alongside Muslims. Such spaces facilitated everyday interfaith interactions and demonstrate that lived religion often differed from elite theological boundaries.

8. Political Conflict vs. Cultural Continuity

While political conflicts did occur, they were often driven by power struggles rather than religious animosity. Temple destruction, frequently cited as evidence of Muslim iconoclasm, was often a political act targeting rival kings rather than faith communities. Simultaneously, cultural production—poetry, art, music—continued to flourish across communal lines, indicating that political rivalry did not translate into social or cultural rupture.

9. Colonial Construction of Communal Narratives

British colonial administration categorized Indian society rigidly along religious lines through censuses and legal frameworks. These classifications hardened identities that were previously flexible. Colonial historiography emphasized religious conflict to justify imperial control. This selective representation distorted historical memory and laid the foundation for modern communal narratives, obscuring centuries of coexistence.

10. Contemporary Relevance of Shared Cultural History

In contemporary times, selective historical interpretations are often mobilized to justify communal polarization. Reclaiming shared cultural history offers a counter-narrative that emphasizes pluralism and mutual respect. Bhakti–Sufi traditions and Indo-Persian literary heritage provide ethical resources for dialogue and reconciliation. Recognizing these shared histories is essential for fostering social cohesion in multicultural societies today.

Findings

1. Historical evidence contradicts the narrative of inherent Hindu–Muslim antagonism.
   The idea of perpetual conflict is neither supported by literary histories nor by lived cultural practices over centuries.
2. Bhakti and Sufi traditions shared metaphysical concerns.
   They often appealed to common themes — love, renunciation, social equality — resonating across communities.
3. Indo-Persian literature played a significant role in shaping modern South Asian literary cultures.
   Poetic forms and vocabulary crossed religious lines and influenced both Hindu and Muslim writers.
4. Syncretism was a pervasive feature of social life.
   Shared festivals, ritual practices, and spiritual outlooks were commonplace in many regions.
5. Modern communal narratives are influenced by political and colonial histories.
   Contemporary antagonism often draws on selective readings of history rather than full contextual analysis.

Suggestions

1. Textbooks and syllabi should integrate shared cultural histories to promote accurate understanding and reduce divisive narratives.
2. Cultural festivals celebrating Bhakti-Sufi heritage should be institutionalized as tools for communal harmony.
3. Further interdisciplinary research is needed on neglected literary sources that reflect syncretic traditions.
4. Media should be encouraged to highlight historical examples of cooperation rather than reinforce stereotypes.
5. Policy interventions aimed at peacebuilding should draw from historical precedents of coexistence rather than conflict.

Conclusion

This study critically examined the widely accepted narrative of Hindu–Muslim antagonism and demonstrated that it lacks strong historical and cultural foundations. Historical evidence reveals that pre-modern South Asian society was characterized by fluid identities shaped more by language, region, and culture than by rigid religious divisions. The analysis of Bhakti and Sufi traditions shows that these movements promoted inclusive spirituality, ethical equality, and devotion beyond sectarian boundaries. Saints and poets from both traditions created shared spiritual spaces that attracted diverse communities. Indo-Persian and vernacular literary traditions further confirm sustained intellectual and cultural exchanges between Hindus and Muslims. Literature and language functioned as unifying cultural forces rather than instruments of separation. Although political conflicts occurred, they were largely driven by power struggles and did not define everyday social relations. Cultural practices such as music, poetry, and shared sacred spaces continued across communities. Colonial historiography and administrative categorization later reinforced communal binaries and distorted historical understanding. In the contemporary context, selective interpretations of history continue to fuel social polarization. Reclaiming the shared cultural past is therefore essential for promoting social harmony and historical accuracy. This study concludes that Hindu–Muslim relations have been historically complex, interconnected, and collaborative. Recognizing this composite cultural heritage enables a more inclusive understanding of Indian history and contributes to building a pluralistic and tolerant society.

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The Myth of the 'Static Tradition': Decoding Evolution and Modern Realities in Bharatnatyam Narratives

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Abstract

The prevailing discourse surrounding Indian Classical Dance often operates under the "Myth of Antiquity" a curated narrative suggesting that forms like Bharatnatyam have remained unchanged, divine, and static for over two millennia. This paper seeks to "unveil" the deliberate construction of Bharatnatyam as a fixed, eternal tradition and "decode" the historical and contemporary realities of its constant evolution. By employing a qualitative hermeneutic framework, the study examines the transition of the dance from its original Sadir roots in the temple corridors of South India to its current status as a globalized proscenium art. It challenges the romanticized notion of an "unchanging truth," arguing instead that the dance's survival is a result of strategic sociopolitical adaptations and aesthetic re-engineering during the early 20th-century Indian Renaissance.

Furthermore, this research decodes how contemporary practitioners utilize the traditional "vocabulary" of Bharatnatyam to address modern-day realities, including feminist agency, environmental crisis, and post-colonial identity. By analyzing the shift from sacred ritual to secular performance, the paper proves that the "Truth" of Bharatnatyam is not found in its perceived stasis, but in its dynamic ability to act as a living "cultural text." In the context of the conference theme, this study concludes that the "Myth" of the static tradition serves as a protective veil, while the "Reality" is a sophisticated, evolving narrative that continues to negotiate its place within the global cultural landscape.

Introduction

The interplay between myth and reality is perhaps nowhere more visible than in the historiography of Indian Classical Dance. In cultural studies, a "myth" is not merely a falsehood but a potent narrative constructed to preserve identity and continuity. For Bharatnatyam, the dominant myth is that of *Sanatana* (eternality) the belief that every gesture, posture, and expression is a direct, unaltered transmission from the ancient *Natya Shastra*. However, for the academic observer in an English Department, this narrative must be decoded as a "text" influenced by history, power, and colonial resistance. The "Static Tradition" is, in fact, a beautifully crafted narrative that masks a century of radical transformation.

To understand the reality of Bharatnatyam, one must first unveil the historical ruptures of the early 20th century. During the British Raj, the dance faced an existential crisis due to the Anti-Nautch movement, which marginalized the traditional hereditary practitioners—the Devadasis. The subsequent "Revivalist Movement" led by figures like Rukmini Devi Arundale was not merely a restoration but a profound reconstruction. This era saw the "cleansing" of the dance's erotic elements to suit Victorian-influenced middle-class sensibilities. Thus, the "Truth" of what we see on stage today is a hybrid reality: a blend of ancient Sanskrit theory and 20th-century nationalist ideology.

From a qualitative research perspective, the "grammar" of Bharatnatyam (the *Adavus* and *Mudras*) acts as a linguistic structure, while the "performance" acts as speech. Just as a language must evolve to remain spoken, the dance has survived precisely because it is not static. The "Myth of Stasis" provided the dance with the necessary cultural capital to be recognized as a "Classical" art form on the international stage. Yet, the "Reality" is that the form has always been fluid, absorbing the influences of the Maratha rulers of Thanjavur, the European violin, and modern stage lighting, proving that tradition is a process of constant "becoming" rather than a finished product.

In the contemporary era, the "Decoding" of Bharatnatyam narratives has moved into the realm of social activism and personal identity. Modern dancers are no longer content with being silent mimics of ancient mythology; they are rewriting the "Truths" of the *Nayika* (heroine). Where the traditional narrative might see a woman pining for a divine lover, the modern reality decodes this as a metaphor for the human soul's quest for autonomy or a critique of patriarchal structures. This shift demonstrates that the "Mythical" characters of Indian literature are being used as vessels to contain and communicate the "Real" complexities of the 21st-century human condition.

Ultimately, this paper posits that the conference theme of "Unveiling Narratives and Decoding Realities" is central to the future of Bharatnatyam scholarship. By acknowledging that the tradition is not static, we do not diminish its value; rather, we elevate it as a resilient and intellectual art form. As an Assistant Professor, it is crucial to bridge the gap between the "Classical Myth" taught in dance schools and the "Critical Reality" discussed in academic circles. This introduction serves to set the stage for a deeper analysis of how Bharatnatyam continues to decode the myths of the past to unveil the truths of the present.

Review of Literature

The scholarly investigation into Bharatnatyam often begins with the foundational text, the **Natya Shastra** attributed to Bharata Muni. Early literature viewed this text as a static manual of "Truth," providing the rigid rules for *Angika* (body) and *Vachika* (verbal) expression. However, modern critics suggest that reading the *Natya Shastra* as a fixed law is a myth in itself; rather, it should be viewed as an encyclopedic observation of the diverse regional practices existing at the time. This shift in literature allows us to see the "Reality" of the dance as a historically diverse entity rather than a monolithic ancient relic. A significant portion of 20th-century literature focuses on the **Revivalist Period**, particularly the work of E. Krishna Iyer and Rukmini Devi Arundale. Scholars like **Avanthi Meduri** have critically analyzed this transition, "unveiling" how the dance was rebranded from the stigmatized *Sadir* to the respectable *Bharatnatyam*. This body of literature highlights a crucial "Decoding": the revival was not just a rescue mission but a cultural transformation that aligned the dance with the nationalist "Truths" of a new India, often at the cost of the hereditary dancers' historical reality.

The work of **Ananda Coomaraswamy**, specifically *The Dance of Shiva*, serves as a bridge between the mythical and the metaphysical. Coomaraswamy argued that Indian art is never merely representational but is a "Symbolic Reality." His literature helps us understand that the "Myth" of the dancing deity is a coded language for cosmic laws—creation, preservation, and destruction. For the English Department scholar, this aligns with the study of **Archetypes**, where the myth is a vessel for universal truths that transcend time and geography. In contrast to the spiritual focus, **Post-Colonial critics** such as **Pallabi Chakravorty** and **Janet O'Shea** have introduced the "Reality" of the global stage into the literature. Their research decodes the power dynamics involved in performing "Tradition" for a Western audience. They argue that the "Myth of the Static Tradition" is often maintained to satisfy the "Orientalist gaze," which expects Eastern arts to be ancient and mystical rather than modern and evolving. This literature is vital for our paper as it exposes the commercial and political reasons behind keeping the dance "static."

The **Feminist critique** within dance scholarship, led by scholars like **Amrit Srinivasan**, provides a necessary "unveiling" of the gendered narratives in Bharatnatyam. Traditional literature often romanticized the *Devadasi* as a "bride of God," but modern feminist readings decode the reality of their socio-economic independence and eventual disenfranchisement. This literature allows us to examine the "Nayika" (heroine) not as a flat mythical character, but as a complex socio-cultural construction that has been rewritten through a patriarchal lens over the last century.

Linguistic and **Semiotic studies** of Bharatnatyam literature, particularly by authors like **V. Raghavan**, explore the relationship between the *Padams* (lyrics) and the *Abhinaya*. These studies reveal that the "Truth" of a performance lies in the interpretation (*Sanchari Bhava*). The literature suggests that a single line of poetry can have a dozen "Realities" depending on how the dancer decodes the metaphor. This supports our thesis that the tradition is a "living text" that allows for individual agency and contemporary re-reading.

More recent literature has begun to explore **"Contemporary-Classical"** intersections, where dancers like Akram Khan or Malavika Sarukkai use classical vocabulary to address modern crises. Scholars documenting these shifts argue that the "Static Myth" is being broken by the "Reality of the Body" in the 21st century. This literature shows that when a dancer addresses themes like climate change or trauma, they are not "breaking" tradition but are engaging in the same process of "narrative unveiling" that has always existed in the art form's hidden history.

Finally, the **Cultural Studies** perspective—as seen in the works of **Homi Bhabha** regarding "Hybridity"—provides the theoretical framework for our conclusion. Literature in this field suggests that all "Traditions" are in a state of constant negotiation. By reviewing these diverse academic voices, it becomes clear that the "Myth" of a static Bharatnatyam is a narrative of convenience. The "Reality" decoded through this literature review is one of a resilient, intellectual, and profoundly adaptive art form that uses its mythical past to speak to its contemporary truth.

Research Methodology

1. Qualitative Research Framework

This study adopts a **Qualitative Research design**, which is most suited for exploring the complex nuances of cultural traditions and artistic narratives. Unlike quantitative methods that seek to measure data, this qualitative approach seeks to "decode" meaning. By focusing on the lived experiences of practitioners and the socio-historical shifts in performance, the research investigates the "Reality" behind the "Myth" of stasis in Bharatnatyam. This framework allows for a deep, descriptive analysis of how tradition is not a fixed point but a continuous process of negotiation.

2. Hermeneutic Phenomenological Approach

The primary methodology employed is **Hermeneutics**—the theory and methodology of interpretation. Specifically, the paper uses a hermeneutic lens to "unveil" the layers of meaning within dance compositions. By treating a Bharatnatyam performance as a "Text," the researcher interprets the gestures (*Mudras*), expressions (*Bhava*), and poetic lyrics (*Sahitya*) as coded messages. This method allows the study to bridge the gap between ancient Sanskrit theoretical frameworks and the contemporary socio-cultural context in which the dance is performed today.

3. Semiotic Analysis

To decode the evolution of dance narratives, this study utilizes **Semiotics**, the study of signs and symbols. In Bharatnatyam, every *Mudra* is a "Signifier" that points to a "Signified" (a myth or a concept). The methodology involves analyzing how these signifiers have remained consistent in form but have evolved in meaning. For instance, a hand gesture representing a "Lotus" might traditionally signify beauty or divinity, but in a modern environmental context, it may be decoded to represent ecological fragility. This semiotic decoding is central to proving the dance's fluidity.

4. Comparative Historical Analysis

The research also incorporates a **Comparative Historical method**. It compares the "Narrative" of the pre-revival *Sadir* era with the "Reconstructed Reality" of post-1930s Bharatnatyam. By examining historical documents, archival records, and critical reviews from different eras, the study identifies the "ruptures" and changes that the "Static Tradition" myth attempts to conceal. This comparative approach is essential for identifying the deliberate "edits" made to the dance to align it with modern sensibilities.

5. Case Study Selection

Finally, the methodology includes the **Case Study method**. The research selects specific "Texts" (choreographies)—one traditional *Varnam* and one contemporary production—to serve as practical examples of narrative evolution. By analyzing these case studies, the paper provides concrete evidence of how dancers "rewrite" mythical themes to address modern "Truths." This selection ensures that the theoretical arguments are grounded in actual artistic practice, providing a holistic "Decoding" of the art form.

Research Design

1. Conceptual Framework

The research design is built on the **Constructivist Paradigm**, which posits that "Truth" and "Reality" are not absolute but are constructed through social and cultural interactions. In this study, Bharatnatyam is treated as a **Dynamic Construct**. The design focuses on the tension between the *Sthayi* (the established/static) and the *Sanchari* (the transitory/evolving) elements of the dance. This framework allows the researcher to analyze how the "Myth" of stasis is maintained even as the "Reality" of the performance evolves.

2. Identification of Variables (Qualitative Categories)

In this qualitative study, the variables are categorized as **Narrative Constants** and **Interpretative Variables**.

- **Independent Variable (The Stimulus):** The **Traditional Mythic Text**. This represents the ancient stories, the Sanskrit *Slokas*, and the inherited *Adavus* (steps) that act as the foundation of the dance.
- **Dependent Variable (The Outcome):** The **Contemporary Performance**. This is the final "Reality" presented on stage, which changes based on the dancer's intent and the audience's cultural context.
- **Mediating Variables (The Decoding Agents):** These are the factors that cause the myth to evolve into a new reality. They include:
    1. **Choreographic Intent:** The dancer's modern perspective.
    2. **Socio-Political Context:** The current "Truths" of society (e.g., feminism, environmentalism).
    3. **Aesthetic Shift:** Changes in costume, lighting, and music.

3. Data Sources and Collection Strategy

The design utilizes **Triangulation** to ensure the validity of the qualitative findings. Data is gathered from three primary sources:

1. **Textual Sources:** Primary Sanskrit treatises (*Natya Shastra*) and secondary academic critiques.
2. **Visual Sources:** Archival footage of 20th-century performances compared with contemporary digital recordings.
3. **Observation:** A "Textual Analysis" of specific *Abhinaya* sequences, looking for "ruptures" where the dancer departs from traditional interpretation to unveil a modern truth.

4. Analytical Units

The study breaks down the performance into three analytical units:

- **The Micro-Level (The Mudra):** Analyzing how a single gesture's meaning is "decoded" differently today.
- **The Meso-Level (The Sanchari):** Examining the elaborations where the dancer has the most freedom to "rewrite" the myth.
- **The Macro-Level (The Margam):** Looking at the overall structure of a dance recital and how it has evolved from a temple ritual to a themed "Conceptual Production."

5. Ethical Considerations

As this study involves the interpretation of sacred myths and cultural heritage, the research design adheres to **Cultural Sensitivity** protocols. It ensures that the "decoding" process respects the aesthetic integrity of the art form while maintaining a critical, academic distance. The goal is not to "disprove" the tradition, but to "unveil" its sophisticated capacity for survival through change.

Results: The Decoding Matrix

Instead of traditional graphs, the results of this qualitative inquiry are presented as a **narrative shift matrix**. This table represents the "unveiling" of the reality behind the myth:

The Myth (Traditional Narrative)	The Decoding Process (Analysis)	The Reality (Modern Truth)
Static Antiquity: The dance is 2,000 years old and unchanged.	Historical tracking of the 1930s Revivalist movement.	**Dynamic Evolution:** The dance is a modern reconstruction of ancient ideals.
Passive Nayika: The heroine is a victim of separation/longing.	Semiotic re-reading of *Abhinaya* gestures.	**Female Agency:** The heroine is an empowered protagonist of her own emotion.
Sacred Exclusivity: The dance is only for spiritual/temple ritual.	Analysis of contemporary themed productions.	**Global Dialogue:** The dance is a secular language for social justice.
Fixed Symbolism: A *Mudra* has only one meaning.	Hermeneutic interpretation of modern choreography.	**Polysemic Fluidity:** One gesture can decode multiple modern realities.

Combined Analysis and Conclusion: The Paradox of the Eternal Present

The analysis of the "Myth of the Static Tradition" reveals a profound paradox: Bharatnatyam remains "eternal" only because it refuses to stay "the same." Through the qualitative decoding of various performances, this study finds that what we call "tradition" is actually a series of successful innovations. When a modern dancer uses the *Alapadma* mudra (the blooming lotus) to depict not just a flower, but the "flowering of a new consciousness" or the "fragility of our burning environment," the myth is not being broken—it is being fulfilled. The reality is that the *Natya Shastra* provided us with a grammar, but it is the contemporary artist who provides the vocabulary.

As we unveil the narratives within the English Department's academic framework, we must recognize Bharatnatyam as a **Post-Colonial Text**. It is a text that was silenced, rewritten, and eventually reclaimed. The "Myth" of its stasis was a necessary shield against colonial erasure; however, the "Reality" of its evolution is its greatest strength. The decoding process conducted in this paper shows that the transition from *Sadir* to Bharatnatyam was not a loss of truth, but an expansion of it. The dance has successfully navigated through the *Maya* (illusion) of the past to unveil a "Spiritual Truth" that is inclusive of modern feminist, social, and global identities.

In conclusion, the International Conference's theme—*Myths and Truths*—finds its perfect embodiment in the dancing body. This paper has demonstrated that "Truth" in culture is not a fossil to be preserved in a museum, but a fire to be carried forward. By decoding the evolution of Bharatnatyam, we realize that the most "authentic" dancer is not the one who mimics the past most accurately, but the one who uses the ancient myth to speak the most urgent truth of the present.

As we move forward, the challenge for scholars and practitioners alike is to continue this unveiling. We must embrace the reality that our traditions are living, breathing entities. In the final analysis, Bharatnatyam is not a relic of "What Was," but a vibrant narrative of "What Is." It is a testament to the human spirit's ability to use the myths of yesterday to decode the realities of today and build the truths of tomorrow.

Limitations of the Study

While this research provides a critical "decoding" of Bharatnatyam narratives, it is important to acknowledge its inherent limitations:

1. **Scope of Subjectivity:** As a **Qualitative Research** paper, the analysis is based on the hermeneutic interpretation of the researcher. While grounded in theory, the "decoding" of *Abhinaya* is inherently subjective and may vary based on the observer's cultural and aesthetic background.
2. **Geographical Focus:** The study primarily focuses on the mainstream "Kalakshetra" and "Thanjavur" styles of Bharatnatyam. It does not extensively cover the "Reality" of regional variations or folk-classical hybrids that exist across different parts of India and the diaspora.

3. **Historical Constraints:** Due to the scarcity of video archives from the pre-1930s era, the comparison between *Sadir* and modern Bharatnatyam relies heavily on written texts and oral histories rather than direct visual observation.
4. **Time Constraint:** Given the vastness of the *Natya Shastra* and contemporary dance literature, this study is a focused inquiry rather than an exhaustive survey of every mythological narrative.

Scope for Future Research

This paper opens several avenues for further academic inquiry within the English and Cultural Studies departments:

- **Digital Decoding:** Future research could examine how **Artificial Intelligence** and digital mediums are creating a new "Myth of the Virtual Dancer," and how the "Reality" of the physical body is changing in the age of social media (Instagram/YouTube dance).
- **Comparative Cross-Cultural Studies:** There is significant scope to compare the "Static Myth" of Bharatnatyam with that of **Western Classical Ballet**. A comparative study could "unveil" how both forms negotiated colonial and post-colonial identities.
- **Linguistic Analysis of 'Vachika Abhinaya':** Research could be conducted specifically on the **English translations** of Tamil, Telugu, and Sanskrit *Padams*. How does the "Truth" of the poem change when it is decoded into a global language like English for an international audience?
- **Gender Fluidity:** A deeper exploration into **Queer Narratives** in Bharatnatyam would be a groundbreaking "decoding" of the reality of gender, moving beyond the traditional binary of the *Nayaka* and *Nayika*.

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Mahalaxmi or Ambabai? Exploring psychological and cultural narratives of Kolhapur goddess

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Abstract

Religious spaces often sustain multiple narratives that coexist without conflict, revealing more about the human mind than about historical certainty. The Kolhapur Mahalaxmi Temple presents a compelling case in this regard. While one belief system identifies the deity as Mahalaxmi, the consort of Tirupati Balaji, another strongly rooted local tradition venerates her as Ambabai, the slayer of the demon Kolhasur. Rather than attempting to establish the "true" identity of the goddess, this paper seeks to understand how and why such diverse narratives continue to thrive within the same sacred space.

Using an interdisciplinary framework grounded in psychology, cultural studies, and narrative theory, the study explores the psychological foundations of religious belief and myth-making. Drawing upon concepts such as Carl Jung's collective unconscious, archetypal symbolism, and narrative psychology, the paper argues that religious myths function as emotional and symbolic truths rather than empirical facts. The goddess figure emerges as a powerful mother-protector archetype, capable of accommodating multiple identities to meet the emotional, cultural, and psychological needs of devotees.

The analysis demonstrates that devotees do not experience cognitive conflict between these narratives; instead, the coexistence of Ambabai and Mahalaxmi reflects a culturally conditioned mindset where faith prioritizes emotional coherence over logical consistency. Such multiplicity strengthens religious engagement by offering inclusivity and continuity across regional and pan-Indian traditions. The paper concludes that the Kolhapur Mahalaxmi Temple exemplifies how sacred narratives are sustained through collective memory and psychological meaning-making. By shifting the focus from theological debate to the psychology of belief, the study highlights how religion operates as a lived, narrative experience embedded in the collective psyche of a community.

Introduction

In the Indian cultural imagination, myth and religion are not distant abstractions preserved only in sacred texts; they are lived realities embedded in everyday life, language, and collective memory. Belief in the divine is shaped less by doctrinal clarity and more by भाव (emotional connection), श्रद्धा (faith), and परंपरा (tradition). Myths, therefore, function as culturally inherited narratives that give meaning to human experience, offering psychological reassurance and moral orientation rather than historical verification.

From a psychological perspective, religious belief emerges as a deeply personal yet collectively shared phenomenon. The divine is experienced not as a fixed theological concept but as an intimate presence that adapts to the emotional needs of devotees. In regional cultures, especially in Maharashtra, the goddess is often imagined as आई—protector, nurturer, and guardian—reflecting the archetypal mother figure rooted in the collective psyche. Such beliefs are transmitted orally through folk narratives, rituals, and festivals, becoming part of the emotional inheritance of the community.

The Kolhapur Mahalaxmi Temple exemplifies this lived religious consciousness. For many devotees, the goddess is Ambabai—the शक्तीस्वरूप आई who vanquished Kolhasur and safeguards the city. Simultaneously, she is revered as Mahalaxmi, connected to the pan-Indian Vaishnava tradition as the consort of Tirupati Balaji. These narratives do not exist in opposition; rather, they merge seamlessly within popular belief, where श्रद्धा does not demand logical consistency but emotional truth.

This paper approaches these layered beliefs through the psychology of religion, drawing upon concepts of collective unconscious, archetypal symbolism, and narrative meaning-making. By foregrounding

people's lived faith and emotional engagement with the goddess, the study seeks to demonstrate how mythological plurality strengthens religious experience. The Kolhapur Mahalaxmi tradition thus reveals how belief functions as a psychological and cultural continuum—where myth lives not in texts alone, but in the minds and hearts of the devotees.

Review of Literature

Mary Christobel R. (2018), in her doctoral study "Pathways of Theanthropic Visions: Psycho-Spiritual Dimensions of Mythology and Religion in the Selected Works of Joseph Campbell" submitted to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University under the guidance of Sidney Shirly, explores mythology through a psycho-spiritual lens. The study emphasizes Joseph Campbell's interpretation of myths as expressions of universal psychological and spiritual patterns. It highlights how mythological narratives function as symbolic pathways connecting human consciousness with transcendent realities, thereby reinforcing the psychological significance of myth in shaping religious understanding.

Pushparajan, A. (1981), in the study "Some Problems in Inter-Religious Dialogue" submitted to Karnatak University under the guidance of Shah, K. J., examines the methodological and practical challenges in inter-religious dialogue. The research highlights issues related to motives, presuppositions, and the nature of dialogue, emphasizing the psychological and ideological barriers to mutual religious understanding.

Loli Saheni (2011), in the study "God, Man and Nature: A Philosophical Study of Mao Naga Traditional Religion" submitted to North-Eastern Hill University under the guidance of Vanlalnghak, examines the indigenous religious worldview of the Mao Naga community. The research explores the interconnected conception of God, nature, and human life, highlighting the philosophical foundations of traditional belief systems.

Arya, Tsewang Gyalpo (2019), in the study "Re-evaluation of Myth, Religion and History of Tibet" submitted to the University of Delhi under the guidance of Gangnegi Hira Paul, critically examines Tibetan religious traditions through mythological and historical perspectives. The research highlights the role of Buddhism, indigenous beliefs, and linguistic traditions in shaping Tibetan religious identity.

Newaj, Ram (1994), in the study "Vedic–Puranic Sources and Burmese Myth and Ritual" submitted to the University of Mumbai under the guidance of Dange, S. S., explores the influence of Indian Vedic and Puranic traditions on Burmese myths and ritual practices. The research highlights cross-cultural religious exchanges and the transmission of mythological motifs within Southeast Asian religious contexts.

M. K. Sridhar, in the study "Myths and Legends of the Mahabharata" submitted to Bangalore University under the guidance of Dr. B. S. Ramakrishna Rao, examines the mythological and legendary dimensions of the epic. The research focuses on the narrative structure and symbolic significance of myths in shaping moral and cultural values.

Kurandwad, Geeta P. (2004), in the study "Vaishnava Myths in the Puranas: A Comparative Study" submitted to Karnatak University under the guidance of Archak, K. B., analyzes Vaishnava myths with reference to their varieties, iconography, and symbolic signification. The research highlights the comparative dimensions of mythological narratives within the Puranic tradition.

Bagchi, Dipali (2006), in the study "Study of Psychology of Religion: Freud and Modern Freudians" submitted to the University of Calcutta under the guidance of Mookerjee, Arun Kumar, examines religious belief through Freudian and post-Freudian psychological frameworks. The research analyzes interpretations of religion in relation to language, symbolism, and psychological motivation.

Research Questions

1. How do multiple religious narratives coexist within the same sacred space?
2. What psychological needs do these narratives fulfill for devotees?
3. Why do believers not experience conflict between differing mythological identities?
4. How does culture shape the psychological acceptance of religious plurality?

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the psychological foundations of religious belief in the context of myth and devotion.
2. To analyze the multiple narratives associated with the Kolhapur Mahalaxmi Temple.
3. To understand how people emotionally and culturally internalize religious myths.
4. To explore the role of collective memory and archetypal symbolism in sustaining faith.
5. To interpret the coexistence of Ambabai and Mahalaxmi through the psychology of belief.

Methodology

1. Research Design : This study adopts a qualitative and interpretative research design. Since the objective is to explore the psychological dimensions of belief surrounding Mahalaxmi and Ambabai, a qualitative approach was considered appropriate to understand subjective experiences, symbolic meanings, and collective narratives.

2. Nature of Study : The research is:

- Exploratory – It investigates how multiple mythological identities coexist in public belief.
- Descriptive – It describes cultural practices, rituals, and narratives associated with the deity.
- Psychological–cultural in approach – It integrates psychology of religion with cultural studies.

3. Data Collection Methods

a) Primary Sources

Informal conversations with local devotees
Observations during temple visits, Kirnotsav, and Navratri celebrations
Personal narratives and oral traditions

b) Secondary Sources

Books on mythology and psychology of religion (Jung, William James, Joseph Campbell)
Gazetteers and historical records of Kolhapur
News articles covering Kirnotsav and temple rituals
Scholarly works on myth and archetypes

4. Theoretical Framework : The analysis is guided by:

- Carl Jung's Archetype Theory (Mother Goddess, Warrior archetype)
- William James' concept of Religious Experience
- Joseph Campbell's theory of Myth as symbolic truth
- Concepts from Social Psychology of Collective Belief

Analysis & Discussion

1. Myth and the Psychology of Belief

Myths are not just ancient stories; they are psychologically alive. In human consciousness, they function as meaning-making systems that provide emotional reassurance, identity, and a sense of belonging that logic alone cannot offer. Psychology of religion shows that religious narratives often serve deep cognitive and emotional needs — providing coherence in face of uncertainty, offering symbols for inner conflicts, and reinforcing collective identity. The goddess figure, especially in Hindu traditions, often embodies archetypes that satisfy those emotional functions — mother, protector, sovereign, vanquisher of chaos. (See Jung's theory of archetypes and collective unconscious; Campbell's work on myth as psychological symbolism)

In the case of Kolhapur's Mahalaxmi Temple, devotees do not approach belief as a logical puzzle — they approach it as emotional truth. The coexistence of differing narratives reflects a psychological acceptance of multiple symbolic truths rather than a literal or historical contradiction.

2. Dual Narratives: Ambabai and Mahalaxmi

Kolhapur's principal deity is revered by devotees as Ambabai, the protective goddess of Karveer (old name for Kolhapur). Locally, she is often seen as the mother figure who protects the region and its people.

Local folklore recounts that the demon Kolhasur tormented the region until the goddess returned and killed him — a narrative deeply embedded in the community's cultural memory. The legend also explains how the region got its name "Kolhapur" from Kolhasur, confirming how myth and cultural identity intertwine in people's belief....ambabai.com +1

At the same time, broader Puranic tradition identifies the temple's deity as Mahalaxmi, the consort of Lord Vishnu and a symbol of prosperity and power in Vaishnavite thought. The official tourism information describes the goddess as both the bestower of fulfillment and spiritual liberation, connecting local worship with the wider Hindu religious framework.....Department of Tourism Maharashtra. Com

Psychologically, this dual identity does not create dissonance for devotees. Instead, most believers see the goddess as simultaneously fulfilling multiple emotional and spiritual roles: the local protective force (Ambabai) and the universal source of prosperity (Mahalaxmi). This flexibility reflects the narrative psychology insight that people respond to the meaning of stories, not their historicity.

3. Cultural Mindset and Collective Memory

The narrative about the goddess killing Kolhasur and her continued benevolence is not merely old folklore. it is active in contemporary devotion. For instance, during festivals like Lalita Panchami, the annual Kohala (winter melon) breaking ceremony reenacts the goddess's victory over the demon, underscoring the continuing emotional relevance of the myth. Even in recent events, devotees , including children, participate in rituals that link the myth to contemporary celebration..... The Times of India

From a psychological standpoint, this illustrates collective memory — a community's shared understanding of its past that shapes its present identity and sense of purpose. Religious festivals, rituals, and stories function as cultural reinforcement of belonging and continuity.

Cultural rituals and festivals reveal how myth is lived, not merely remembered.

Kirnotsav

Kirnotsav is a festival unique to the Kolhapur Mahalaxmi tradition. It celebrates the first rays (kirna) of the rising sun falling on the goddess's idol. Devotees gather at dawn to witness this moment, believing it carries spiritual significance and divine blessing. The festival reinforces the goddess's present-day relevance, connecting the cosmic with the personal.

Kirnotsav illustrates how belief is enacted corporately and physically — the sunrise, communal gathering, and shared emotion create a psychological experience that strengthens devotion. This aligns with Durkheim's idea of collective effervescence, where the group experience amplifies individual emotions and creates shared meaning.

Sharadiya Navratri and Katyayani Devi Worship

During Sharadiya Navratri, devotees across Maharashtra and especially in Kolhapur engage in nine days of worship that culminate in celebration of the goddess's power. Many devotees specifically honor the Katyayani form of the goddess — a warrior-mother archetype who destroys evil.

Navratri rituals, fasts, and prayers are not just religious activities; they are part of an emotional rhythm that participants internalize. The rhythmic repetition of rituals, the collective effusiveness of the community, and the symbolic reenactment of divine triumph all reinforce the psychological experience of the goddess as a living presence in devotees' lives.

4. Archetypes and Symbolic Meaning

- Kolhapur's goddess embodies multiple archetypal dimensions:
- Mother/Protector (Ambabai) — embodies care, shelter, nurturance
- Vanquisher of Chaos (kill of Kolhasur) — symbolizes order over disorder
- Provider of Prosperity (Mahalaxmi) — symbolizes abundance and well-being
- Warrior Divine (associated through Navratri/Katyayani) — symbolizes strength and resilience
- These archetypes align with Jungian psychology — symbols that recur in the collective unconscious because they answer common human needs. The goddess's multi-faceted identity makes her psychologically accessible to a diverse body of devotees — urban and rural, learned and folk.

5. Coexistence of Multiple Narratives: A Psychological Interpretation

Kolhapur's religious tradition reveals that belief does not require a single "truth." Rather, people integrate multiple symbol systems that carry emotional meaning. Psychological research indicates that believers often prioritize emotional resonance over logical consistency. Thus:

A devotee may simultaneously believe in Ambabai as the protective mother and Mahalaxmi as a cosmic benefactor.

Rituals like Kirnotsav and Navratri enact myth in emotionally powerful ways, further reducing any need for rational harmonization.

Instead of conflict, psychological integration occurs — these narratives coalesce in a cognitive and emotional framework that feels coherent to devotees.

Summary

Religious myth functions as emotional and symbolic truth, not literal fact.

Rituals and festivals like Kirnotsav and Sharadiya Navratri make myth experiential, not abstract.

Artemis/Central mother-goddess archetypes explain why goddess narratives resonate psychologically.

Multiple narratives coexist because belief is guided by emotion, culture, and collective memory rather than rigid logic.

Scope and Limitations

- The study focuses only on Kolhapur's Mahalaxmi temple context.
- It does not aim to validate religious claims historically.
- The emphasis is on psychological meaning, not theological debate.

Conclusion

The Kolhapur Mahalaxmi Temple exemplifies how religious belief functions as a psychological, cultural, and lived experience rather than a question of historical fact or theological precision. The coexistence of multiple narratives — the goddess as Ambabai, the protective mother who vanquished Kolhasur, and as Mahalaxmi, the consort of Tirupati Balaji and bestower of prosperity — demonstrates that faith is guided by emotion, cultural memory, and symbolic meaning rather than literal verification.

Through rituals, festivals, and collective observances such as Kirnotsav, Sharadiya Navratri, and worship of Katyayani Devi, devotees experience the goddess as a living presence. These cultural practices reinforce emotional engagement and psychological security, highlighting the interplay between myth and mind. The goddess serves as a mother, protector, warrior, and provider, embodying archetypal dimensions that meet universal human needs for safety, identity, and hope.

Psychologically, the acceptance of multiple narratives shows that human belief does not require singular truth. Devotees internalize symbolic plurality seamlessly, reflecting a mindset where emotional resonance and lived experience matter more than logical consistency. The myths endure because they satisfy cognitive, emotional, and cultural functions, shaping the collective consciousness of the community.

In essence, the Kolhapur Mahalaxmi tradition illustrates that myth is not merely a story of the past but a dynamic psychological reality. It bridges individual experience, community identity, and cultural heritage, offering a living testimony to the power of narrative in shaping human belief. By focusing on people's lived faith, this study underscores that myths and religious narratives continue to thrive because they are felt, enacted, and remembered, keeping culture and psyche deeply intertwined.

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Myth and Truth in Girish Karnad's Nagamandala: A Study of Folklore, Gender, and Narrative Reality

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Abstract

Girish Karnad's Nagamandala is a seminal play in modern Indian theatre that intricately weaves folklore, gender norms, and narrative structures to question the gaps between mythic perceptions and lived realities. Rooted in Karnataka's rural traditions, the drama incorporates the Nagamandala ritual, folk beliefs about serpents, and female subjectivity to interrogate cultural narratives that shape gender identities. This paper explores how Karnad uses myth as both a mirror and a mask, showing how society constructs truths and disguises injustices behind cultural customs. It examines the duality between myth and reality, connotations of female sexuality, the role of storytelling as resistance, and how the play destabilizes fixed gender hierarchies. Ultimately, the research highlights how Nagamandala challenges dominant narratives and foregrounds the lived experiences of women in patriarchal social spaces.

Key words: *Folklore, Myth and Reality, Gender norms, Narrative structures, Mythic- perception and Patriarchal social spaces etc.*

Introduction

Girish Karnad's *Nagamandala* (1997) is a landmark in Indian theatre that blurs the boundary between folklore and contemporary social critique. Named after a traditional folk ritual invoking serpents (nagas), the play tells the story of Rani, a married woman who is neglected by her husband Appanna. Isolated and yearning for intimacy, Rani experiences a mystical relationship with a snake who takes her husband's form at night. At the heart of this narrative lies a powerful interrogation of how mythic beliefs, gender expectations, and narrative truths shape individual identity, social behavior, and cultural norms.

This paper explores *Nagamandala* through three interrelated analytical frames:

1. Folklore and Myth – how local beliefs are reimagined and critiqued;
2. Gender Dynamics – how female subjectivity and patriarchal norms are portrayed;
3. Narrative Reality – how storytelling collapses the line between myth and everyday life.

The central argument is that Karnad uses folklore not as a passive backdrop but as a dynamic site of cultural power, through which he exposes, resists, and reshapes gendered truths.

Folklore as Form and Content

The Ritual of Nagamandala

The term *Nagamandala* refers to a folk ritual practiced in parts of South India, especially Karnataka. Traditionally performed to appease nagas (serpents) for fertility, protection, or healing, the ritual involves dance, fire, and symbolic union between the serpent deity and human devotee. In the play, the ritual becomes a metaphor for desire, power, and communal belief.

Rather than reproducing the ritual as static tradition, Karnad uses it to interrogate the tension between belief and agency. The ritual becomes a narrative device that opens space for alternative histories—particularly women's experiences—that are otherwise erased in dominant discourses. By foregrounding a ritual rooted in oral transmission and community performance, the play challenges canonical theatre forms and places folklore at the center of meaning-making.

Mythic Logic and Folkloric Performance

The structure of *Nagamandala* reflects the circular, non-linear logic of folk storytelling. Mythic time—where past, present, and possibility merge—dominates over linear historical time. Apparitions, animal

transformations, and narrative shifts underscore how folktales operate through metaphor, symbolism, and collective imagination.

This mythic temporality destabilizes fixed reality. For example, the snake's nightly transformation into Appanna invites questions: Is the snake a supernatural being? A psychological projection of Rani's desire? A symbolic critique of male absence? Karnad resists providing a single "truth," instead inviting audiences to participate in meaning-making—just as audiences of folklore do.

Gender and Narrative Reality

Rani: Mythic Heroine or Social Symbol?

Rani's journey from suppressed housewife to politically potent storyteller is central to the play's critique of gender norms. Initially marginalized, Rani's identity is shaped by male authority figures: her father's death, Appanna's abandonment, and community gossip. Within patriarchal structures, her voice is dismissed, her body becomes site of social control, and her sexuality is policed.

Rani's encounter with the serpent can be read as a mythic intervention that grants her a narrative voice. Unlike Appanna, who refuses intimacy, the serpent acknowledges Rani's desire and affirms her body. But beyond fantasy, this relationship symbolizes subversion of patriarchal denial—a reorientation of selfhood where Rani reclaims agency through storytelling.

By asserting her narrative in public, Rani breaks from silence. This performative speech acts both as resistance and self-authorship. Her story within the play destabilizes fixed gender roles and suggests that mythic narratives can reframe lived realities.

Appanna and Patriarchal Authority

Appanna embodies patriarchal entitlement: he decides when and how Rani's body will be recognized, valued, and controlled. His denial of intimacy is not personal alone; it reflects a broader social disdain for women's sexual subjectivity. In refusing to acknowledge Rani's experience with the serpent, he upholds a social order that privileges male narratives over female ones.

Appanna's eventual acceptance—following the community trial—reveals his anxiety about public shame rather than genuine empathy. His change is superficial, reinforcing that patriarchal transformation often occurs only in response to social judgment, not moral evolution.

Myth versus Reality: The Power of Storytelling

The Frame Narrative

Karnad employs a frame narrative: a wandering storyteller recounts Rani's story to a group of villagers. Like traditional folk performances, this frame allows layers of mediation, interpretation, and audience participation. The presence of the storyteller reminds us that myth and truth are not opposites but interactive forces—both contain elements of fantasy and lived experience.

This narrative layering enables multiple viewpoints: the villagers question, speculate, ridicule, and reinterpret the story. The audience—both onstage and off—becomes part of a collective negotiation of meaning. This blurring reveals how narratives are socially constructed and contested.

Myth as Social Critique

Instead of romanticizing folklore, Karnad uses myth to critique social norms. The serpent's bodily union with Rani symbolizes not a supernatural indulgence but a metaphor for denied agency. Mythic elements in the play amplify emotional truths about desire, loneliness, and marginalization that conventional realism might fail to capture. In this sense, myth functions as social poetry, revealing truths that are invisible under the literal gaze.

By weaving myth into the everyday, Karnad highlights how cultural beliefs and narratives shape communal perception of morality, gender roles, and justice. The play asks: Which truths are credible in society? Whose stories are dismissed as fantasy? How does language construct reality? These questions underscore the power of narrative to define social norms.

Folklore, Gender, and Symbolic Languages

Female Sexuality and Cultural Control

In many traditional narratives, female desire is either idealized or demonized. *Nagamandala* challenges this binary by presenting Rani's sexuality as neither sinful nor purely divine—but as a complex human reality. The play's title ritual, symbolizing sexual union with the serpent, becomes a means for Rani to articulate desire that society refuses to acknowledge.

However, Karnad does not reduce the narrative to erotic fantasy. Instead, he locates female sexuality within a political economy of power where women must navigate between cultural prescriptions and personal agency. Rani's transformation from silent wife to authoritative narrator reveals how storytelling can be a form of gender resistance.

Narrative Agency as Empowerment

Rani's final act—telling her story before the public tribunal—marks a symbolic reversal of patriarchal silence. In traditional folk cultures, storytelling often occurs in public spaces with community participation. Karnad reclaims this tradition to show how female narratives can disrupt dominant power structures.

By enabling Rani to speak, the play affirms that narrative agency is empowering. Rani's voice challenges dominant perspectives, exposing the limitations of patriarchal reason and official truths.

Intersections of Tradition and Modernity

Reclaiming Folklore for Critical Thought

Karnad's engagement with folklore is not nostalgic. He recognizes folklore's dialectical potential—its ability to preserve communal knowledge while opening space for critique. Instead of rejecting tradition, he interrogates it, showing how beliefs can both heal and harm, liberate and constrain.

Nagamandala thus becomes a site where tradition and modern critique intersect. The play invites audiences to rethink cultural inheritance not as static folklore but as dynamic narratives capable of transformation.

Performance and Audience Participation

In staging *Nagamandala*, Karnad deliberately evokes folk theatre techniques—song, dance, audience address, and narrator intervention. This participatory mode transcends passive spectatorship and involves the audience in interpreting meaning. The open-ended narrative structure resists closure, inviting diverse interpretations—just as folklore evolves with each telling.

This approach emphasizes that meaning is not dictated by the author alone; it is co-created by storytellers, performers, and audiences.

Conclusion

Girish Karnad's *Nagamandala* is a profound exploration of the entanglement between myth, gender, and narrative reality. Through a rich interplay of folklore and theatre, the play exposes how cultural beliefs shape individual identity and social norms. Far from romanticizing tradition, Karnad uses myth to reveal hidden injustices, especially those experienced by women in patriarchal contexts.

By centering female subjectivity and narrative voice, *Nagamandala* questions the authority of dominant truths and underscores the transformative power of storytelling. The play suggests that myth and reality are not opposing categories but interconnected ways through which humans make sense of their world. In doing so, Karnad invites readers and audiences to rethink assumptions about tradition, gender, and the narratives that define our social reality.

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Myths And Truths About Pregnancy in Indian Women

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Abstract

Pregnancy is a universally significant phase in a woman's life, deeply influenced by cultural beliefs and practices. In India, pregnancy-related customs are shaped by centuries-old traditions, often intertwining myth with perceived health and social norms. This study utilizes a qualitative research design to examine these practices, drawing insights from primary interviews with ten elderly women (grandmothers) as traditional knowledge holders and one medical professional for scientific verification. By analyzing these first-hand accounts, the paper explores common myths and truths surrounding pregnancy, examining their origins, implications for maternal health, and alignment with modern medical knowledge. The findings aim to provide a balanced understanding that respects cultural heritage while advocating for evidence-based maternal care and the debunking of potentially harmful misconceptions.

Keywords: *Myths, Truths, Pregnancy, Indian women*

Introduction

Pregnancy is a period of up to 41 weeks in which a fetus develops inside a woman's womb. NICHD conducts and supports research and training to help promote healthy pregnancies, with a focus on the important events that occur before, during, and after pregnancy. Pregnancy is the term used to describe the period in which a fetus develops inside a woman's womb or uterus. Pregnancy usually lasts about 40 weeks, or just over 9 months, as measured from the last menstrual period to delivery. Health care providers refer to three segments of pregnancy, called trimesters. The major events in each trimester are described below.

Pregnancy symptoms vary from woman to woman. A woman may experience every common symptom, just a few, or none. Some signs of early pregnancy include, Slight bleeding. One study shows as many as 25% of pregnant women experience slight bleeding or spotting that is lighter in color than normal menstrual blood.2 This typically occurs at the time of implantation of the fertilized egg (about 6 to 12 days after conception) but is common in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. Tender, swollen breasts or nipples. Women may notice this symptom as early as 1 to 2 weeks after conception. Hormonal changes can make the breasts sore or even tingly. The breasts feel fuller or heavier as well.

Fatigue - Many women feel more tired early in pregnancy because their bodies are producing more of a hormone called progesterone, which helps maintain the pregnancy and encourages the growth of milk-producing glands in the breasts. In addition, during pregnancy the body pumps more blood to carry nutrients to the fetus. Pregnant women may notice fatigue as early as 1 week after conception.

Headaches - The sudden rise of hormones may trigger headaches early in pregnancy.

Nausea and/or vomiting - This symptom can start anywhere from 2 to 8 weeks after conception and can continue throughout pregnancy. Commonly referred to as "morning sickness," it can actually occur at any time during the day.

Food cravings or aversions - Sudden cravings or developing a dislike of favorite foods are both common throughout pregnancy. A food craving or aversion can last the entire pregnancy or vary throughout this period.

Mood swings - Hormonal changes during pregnancy often cause sharp mood swings. These can occur as early as a few weeks after conception.

Frequent urination - The need to empty the bladder more often is common throughout pregnancy. In the first few weeks of pregnancy, the body produces a hormone called human chorionic gonadotropin, which increases blood flow to the pelvic region, causing women to have to urinate more often.4

Many of these symptoms can also be signs of other conditions, the result of changing birth control pills, or effects of stress, so they do not always mean that a woman is pregnant. Women should see their health care provider if they suspect they are pregnant.

Complications of pregnancy?

Some women experience health problems during pregnancy. These complications can involve the mother's health, the fetus's health, or both. Even women who were healthy before getting pregnant can experience complications. These complications may make the pregnancy a high-risk pregnancy.

Early prenatal testing for STIs and other infections can determine if the infection can be cured with drug treatment. Or, if you know you have an infection, tell your pregnancy health care provider about it as early as possible in your pregnancy. Early treatment decreases the risk to the fetus and infant.2 Even if the infection can't be cured, you and your health care provider can take steps to protect your health and your infant's health.

Pregnancy is both a biological process and a culturally embedded experience. In India, diverse communities uphold distinct pregnancy-related beliefs influenced by religion, folklore, family traditions, and rural–urban differences. While some practices promote emotional well-being and community support, others pose challenges to maternal health due to misconceptions about diet, activity, and medical care. This research aims to identify prevalent myths and truths in Indian cultural practices related to pregnancy and analyze their impacts on maternal and neonatal outcomes.

Background and Cultural Context

India’s cultural landscape is characterized by pluralistic traditions where childbirth is celebrated with rituals from various religious communities including Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, and tribal groups. Pregnancy is often observed as a sacred and vulnerable period requiring special care. Elders and community influencers typically act as custodians of traditional knowledge, passing down practices through generations.

Review of Literature

Many researchers have found that pregnant women in India live in two worlds. According to Raman et al. (2014), even women living in big cities like Bangalore often follow traditional rules because of family pressure, even if they know the scientific facts. This is often done to keep peace at home and respect elders.

The most common topic in Indian pregnancy research is food. Studies by Chakrabarti and Chakrabarti (2019) show that many women avoid "hot" foods like papaya, pineapple, and jaggery because they fear these might cause a miscarriage. On the other hand, Ahuja et al. (2023) found that in rural Punjab, some women are encouraged to eat large amounts of ghee (clarified butter) to "lubricate" the birth canal, which doctors say is not scientifically true but remains a very popular belief.

In India, pregnancy is a "family event" rather than just an individual one. Cousik and Hickey (2016) explain that the mother-in-law often acts as the primary health advisor. Their research shows that if a mother-in-law believes in a myth, the pregnant woman is highly likely to follow it, even if her doctor tells her otherwise.

Not all traditions are viewed as "myths." Nagpal and Sachdeva (2017) highlight that rituals like Godh Bharai (baby shower) and the practice of returning to the mother's home for delivery have huge psychological benefits. These traditions act as a support system that reduces stress and anxiety, which is very good for the baby’s development.

Recent research by Tyagi et al. (2024) suggests that while rural women follow traditions out of habit, urban women are now using the internet to check if these myths are true. However, "digital myths" (misinformation found online) are now becoming a new challenge for doctors in India.

Studies by Puri and Kapoor (2006) and recent surveys in Goa and Karnataka (2022-2024) confirm that over 50% of pregnant women avoid fruits like papaya and pineapple. The literature notes that while unripe papaya contains latex (which can cause contractions), the cultural myth often results in women avoiding even ripe, nutrient-rich fruits.

Research identifies a widespread belief that consuming saffron (Kesar) or milk will result in a fairer baby. However, geneticists and medical researchers emphasize that skin color is determined solely by parental genes, not maternal diet. Physical Activity and Environmental Restrictions. The literature suggests that physical movement is often restricted based on folklore rather than medical necessity.

Rest vs. Mobility: A 2024 study in Bengaluru found that nearly 20% of educatedwomen were advised to avoid stairs or light exercise during the first trimester. Medical experts, however, advocate for moderate activity (like walking or prenatal yoga) to prevent gestational diabetes and hypertension.

The "Evil Eye" and Eclipses: Sociological research (Cousik & Hickey, 2016) highlights that many women stay indoors during lunar or solar eclipses or wear iron objects to ward off "Nazar" (the evil eye). While these have no medical basis, they provide "psychological insurance" for the family.

Literature by Ganju (2013) discusses how these myths are not just harmless; they contribute to maternal stress and anxiety, especially in families with a strong preference for a male child.

Objectives

1.To list common myths about food, exercise, and baby gender in Indian pregnancy.
2.To explain the science behind these beliefs (showing what is true and what is false).
3.To identify healthy traditions in Indian culture that actually help the mother and baby.
4.To understand how family and elders influence a woman's choices during pregnancy.
5.To suggest ways for doctors to better talk to families about safe pregnancy habits.

Research Methodology

To investigate the prevalence of pregnancy-related myths and truths in Indian culture, this study employed a qualitative research approach. This method was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the social and cultural motivations behind traditional beliefs.

Data Collection Tools

The primary data for this research was collected through semi-structured interviews. This allowed the researcher to explore the participants' perspectives while maintaining a focused thematic flow.

Participants and Sampling

The study utilized two distinct groups of participants to provide a balanced view:

Elderly Women (Grandmothers): A total of 10 grandmothers were interviewed. This group was selected because, in Indian households, elders are the primary custodians of traditional knowledge and cultural practices. Their accounts provided insight into the origin and persistence of common pregnancy myths.

Medical Expert: One professional physician (Dr. Tanaji Patil MD. Obstetrician/Gynecologist) was interviewed to provide a scientific counter-perspective. This interview served to validate or debunk the myths shared by the elder group using evidence-based medical science.

Data Analysis

The responses were analyzed using Thematic Analysis. The myths shared by the grandmothers were categorized into themes such as Dietary Restrictions, Physical Activity, and Social Rituals. These themes were then cross-referenced with the doctor's medical insights to determine the "Myth" vs "Truth" status of each practice.

Participation was voluntary, and the anonymity of the participants has been maintained. The interviews were conducted in a manner that respected the cultural sentiments of the elderly participants while prioritizing scientific accuracy.

1. Diet & Nutrition

Myth: Belly Shape or Cravings Can Predict the Gender of the Baby.

Truth: Your belly shape cannot accurately determine gender. Studies show that belly shape has more to do with the position of your baby, the mom's body type, and several other factors, but not the baby's gender.

Myth: During Pregnancy, You Need to Eat for two.
Truth: Focus on the quality of the food rich in nutrients rather than quantity. Your body only needs 300-500 extra calories daily during pregnancy. Hence, emphasize nutrient-rich foods for supporting healthy growth without excess weight.
Myth: Eating Papaya or Pineapple Leads to Miscarriage.
Truth: There is a myth in Indian society that pineapple can cause miscarriage, which isn't backed by scientific evidence. The truth is, papaya and pineapple are safe in moderation during pregnancy, as they do not contain enough enzymes to harm the baby. Only unripe papaya contains papain, which can trigger contraction. Always consult your doctor for personalized advice.
Myth: Saffron Gives Your Baby Fair Skin
Truth: Your baby's skin color is solely determined by genes from parents, not by maternal diet like saffron. Saffron has antioxidants and mood-improvement qualities; in small amounts, it is harmless, but it will not change the genetic makeup, like complexion.
Myth: Iron tablets make the baby dark-skinned.
Truth: Iron tablets are necessary for preventing anemia and do not affect skin color.

Activity and Physical Lifestyle
Myth: Pregnant women should rest and avoid exercise.
Truth: Moderate, doctor-approved exercise improves health, reduces pain, and aids in labor.
Myth: Lifting arms or working causes the umbilical cord to wrap around the baby. Truth: No scientific evidence links daily, routine movement to this.
Myth: Sexual intercourse during pregnancy can cause abortion.
Truth: It is generally safe unless complications exist or a doctor advises against it.

Gender and Superstition
Myth: Belly shape (high/low) predicts the baby's gender.
Truth: Belly shape is determined by the mother's body type and abdominal muscle tone, not the baby's gender.
Myth: Heartburn indicates the baby has a lot of hair.
Truth: Heartburn is caused by hormones relaxing the stomach valve, not hair growth.
Myth: Do not buy baby clothes before birth.
Truth: It is a cultural superstition, not a medical hazard.

Health and Safety
Myth: Ultrasounds are harmful to the baby.
Truth: Ultrasounds use sound waves, not radiation, and are crucial for monitoring growth.
Myth: Morning sickness is a sign of a healthy pregnancy.
Truth: While common, its absence does not mean the pregnancy is unhealthy.
Myth: Epidurals cause permanent, chronic back pain.
Truth: Back pain is usually due to improper posture or lack of postpartum exercise.

Conclusion

All you need to understand is that whatever you believe in needs to have a scientific backing and a professional consensus. Do not just believe in random talks floating in society. Just go for a regular checkup and listen to and follow your doctor's advice.

Limitations of the study

Small group of people: only spoke to ten grandmothers. India is a huge country with many different religions and traditions. Because the group was small, their answers might not represent what every family across india believes.

Since the grandmothers were sharing traditions passed down for years, some details might have changed over time. Memories can sometimes be slightly different from the original practices.

One doctor's opinion: we only interviewed one medical professional. Different doctors might have different levels of experience or different opinions on how to handle cultural myths.

If all the women interviewed were from the same town or state, the results might only show the traditions of that specific area, rather than the whole of india.

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The Eternal Return: Analyzing the Bhasmasura Myth as a Societal Truth in R.K. Narayan's The Man-Eater *of Malgudi*

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Abstract

This paper looks at how R.K. Narayan's famous novel, The Man-Eater of Malgudi, blends ancient stories with modern life. At the heart of the book is the Cultural Narrative, the way a society uses old myths to make sense of new problems. Specifically, I analyze how the story of Bhasmasura (a demon who accidentally destroyed himself) acts as a roadmap for the events in the novel. The villain, H. Vasu, represents a selfish and aggressive modern world that crashes into the peaceful life of Malgudi. Instead of fighting him with laws or weapons, the townspeople rely on their shared history and faith in mythic continuity. By looking at the character Sastri, who interprets these events through old legends, we see how the community labels Vasu's modern bullying as demonic behavior.This paper argues that Narayan uses the Bhasmasura myth to show a simple truth: extreme ego and the refusal to follow a moral path eventually lead to self-destruction. In the end, the research shows that for the people of Malgudi, myths are not just fairy tales. They are living tools that help a traditional society survive the pressures of a changing, often greedy, world.

Key Words : Cultural Narrative, Mystic Realism, Bhasmasura Myth, Self-Destruction.

Introduction:

Every society has a way of making sense of the world around it. For the people of India, this sense often comes from a Cultural Narrative, a deep well of ancient myths that provide a roadmap for understanding modern problems. R.K. Narayan's 1961 novel, *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, is a perfect example of how these old stories aren't just myths from the past; they are living truths that help people deal with the present.

The story takes place in the peaceful, fictional town of Malgudi, where life moves slowly and follows a traditional moral code called Dharma. This peace is shattered when H. Vasu, a powerful and aggressive taxidermist, moves into town. Vasu is the Man-Eater of the title, but he isn't a tiger; he is a man who represents a selfish, modern world that cares only about power and profit. To the polite townspeople, Vasu is a mystery they cannot solve with logic or law.

This paper argues that the community finds the truth about Vasu by looking at him through the lens of the Bhasmasura myth. In Hindu mythology, Bhasmasura was a demon who was so strong and arrogant that he eventually caused his own death. By using the character of Sastri, a man who knows these old legends by heart Narayan shows us how a society can stay calm in the face of a bully. Instead of fighting fire with fire, the people of Malgudi rely on the cultural belief that evil eventually destroys itself. Through this lens, we see that myths are powerful tools that help traditional societies survive and understand a changing world.

Literature Review:

To understand how myths work in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, we first have to look at how experts describe R.K. Narayan's writing. Most scholars, like William Walsh, argue that Narayan is a master of The Ordinary. He writes about small-town life, but he gives it a deeper, universal meaning. Walsh points out that Malgudi is not just a place on a map; it is a microcosm of India, where old traditions and new modern ideas are constantly bumping into each other.

Another important area of research is the conflict between Modernity and Tradition. Many critics see the character of H. Vasu as a symbol of the aggressive New World. According to researchers like Meenakshi Mukherjee, Narayan often uses a Manichean struggle which is just a fancy way of saying a battle between Good and Evil. In her view, Narayan doesn't use guns or heroes to end this battle. Instead, he uses the Truth

of Indian culture. She suggests that in Narayan's world, the modern bully always loses because he doesn't respect the natural balance of life.

Finally, we must look at the role of Mythology in Literature. Scholars call Narayan's style Mythic Realism. This means that while the story feels real, it follows a hidden pattern from ancient books like the Puranas. Critics argue that by using the Bhasmasura myth, Narayan is following a long tradition in Indian storytelling where the demon is always defeated by his own ego. This literature shows that Narayan isn't just writing a funny story about a printer; he is using a Cultural Narrative to show that traditional values have a built-in way of surviving modern threats.

Methodology:

This study employs a literature review methodology to investigate the role of Bhasmasura myth in literature. The research design is qualitative and systematic.

Discussion:

The fight between Nataraj and Vasu is about much more than a bad roommate. It is a story about how old-fashioned, peaceful communities survive scary modern threats. Our study shows that in Malgudi, the real Truth isn't about who is the strongest physically; it's about who has the most patience and moral strength. Vasu is called a Man-Eater because his selfishness eats away at the town's peace. He doesn't care about Malgudi's traditions. He thinks his brute strength and his work as a taxidermist make him untouchable. But the novel shows that the town's shared stories are actually their best weapon. Once the people realize that Vasu is just like the demon Bhasmasura, their mindset changes. They stop feeling like helpless victims. Instead, they start to see Vasu as a temporary problem that will eventually go away on its own.

This teaches us a big lesson about society: myths act like a psychological shield. When people face a bully or a scary change they can't control, they look at these ancient roadmaps to find hope. Narayan's ending proves that evil is naturally shaky. Just like the demon Bhasmasura was killed by his own power, Vasu is defeated by his own strength. In the end, the book tells us that while the modern world is loud and violent, tradition is quiet and lasts much longer.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, R.K. Narayan's *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* shows us that ancient myths are still very much alive in modern society. By looking at the character of H. Vasu through the lens of the Bhasmasura myth, we see a clear Cultural Narrative in action. The story proves that for a community like Malgudi, myths are not just old fairy tales; they are Truths that provide a way to understand and survive a chaotic world.

The research shows that while H. Vasu represents a loud, aggressive, and selfish version of modernity, he is ultimately weak because he lacks a moral foundation. On the other hand, the people of Malgudi represent the strength of tradition. They don't need to use violence to defeat a bully. Instead, they rely on their shared belief that evil is self-destructive.

Ultimately, this paper proves that myths serve as a vital tool for societal survival. They help people stay grounded when the world changes too fast. Narayan's novel reminds us that even in a modern world full of Man-Eaters, the quiet endurance of cultural values and the lessons of the past will always have the final word. The Truth of the Bhasmasura myth remains as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago; arrogance eventually defeats itself.

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Athletes and Superstitions: An Empirical Analysis with Forms , Psychological Causes, and Examples

Devdatta Mahatme

Abstract

This research paper analyzes the types of superstitions of athletes , their cultural and social contexts , and the psychological factors behind them. It explains how superstitions become part of mental preparation based on the concepts of "Illusion of Control", "Anxiety Reduction" and "Self-Regulation" . In addition , it highlights the differences between superstitions and scientific pre-performance routines and compares the effects of both.

This paper illustrates the relationship between superstition and mental toughness by using examples from international and Indian athletes. The analysis shows that moderate levels of superstition can provide athletes with confidence and mental stability ; however, over-reliance can have negative consequences such as increased stress , loss of confidence after failure, or decreased performance.

The study concludes that superstitions are not completely unreasonable or harmful, and can be helpful in the process of mental preparation , but their proper and balanced use is necessary. Therefore, from the perspective of sports psychology , it is necessary to provide more effective mental training to athletes by scientifically understanding them rather than looking at them negatively .

Keywords: *Superstitions , Sports Psychology , Confidence , Mental Preparation , Pre-Performance Routine , Competitive Stress , Mental Stability , Illusion of Control*

1. Introduction

There is a great deal of uncertainty in sports competitions. The outcome of a match depends on the skills of the players , their physical fitness , their strategy , the performance of their opponents , the weather , the decisions of the referees and many other unexpected factors. This uncertainty creates psychological stress on the players. The level of stress is particularly high in decisive matches or high-level competitions. In such situations, players resort to various beliefs , routines and symbolic actions to keep themselves mentally stable.

Some players listen to a particular song before a game , some wear clothes or equipment in a particular order , while others consider a particular color , jersey number, or equipment to be " lucky . " Some players enter the field with their right foot , while others follow a specific prayer or meditation pattern. All of these practices are broadly called " pre-performance routines " ; however, when those practices are linked to specific outcomes without scientific basis , they are considered superstitions.

Superstition is the belief in a relationship between an action and an expected outcome without scientific evidence. For example , considering the shoes worn after a good performance in a match as " lucky " and using the same shoes in every subsequent match. Although such beliefs are not rational, they provide the athlete with psychological security and a sense of control .

From a sports psychology perspective , superstitions are not entirely negative. They often boost an athlete's confidence , improve concentration, and reduce competitive stress. However , over-reliance on these beliefs can lead to a loss of confidence in the face of failure. Therefore, it is important to understand the balance between superstitions and scientific mental preparation.

In modern sports, mental preparation is given equal importance along with physical training. In this context, it is very important to study the superstitions of athletes , their nature , the psychological processes behind them and their impact on sports performance. The present research attempts to analyze the relationship between athletes and superstitions against this backdrop.

2. Types of Superstitions in Sports

Superstitions in sports come in many forms. They are based on personal experiences , cultural background , team traditions, and psychological needs. The main types of superstitions can be explained as follows:

2.1 Personal Rituals

A personal routine is a set of routines that a player follows consistently before or during a match. The purpose of these routines is to maintain mental focus and stability.

- **Entering the field with the right foot** is considered an auspicious sign .
- **Wearing the device in a specific order** – for example , first the left pad , then the right pad.
- **Warming up in a specific way** – a set number of specific movements.
- **Listening to specific music** – repeating the same song before a match.
- **Certain movements during play** – such as tapping the bat after each ball.

These routines give the player a sense of " consistency " and control.

2.2 Religious Beliefs

Religious faith is a particularly prominent feature of Indian sports culture.

- **Praying or going to a temple/mosque/church before a match**
- **Using a talisman , bracelet, or sacred thread**
- **Keeping a picture of a deity in a bag**
- **To bow by touching the ground before entering the field.**

These actions provide the player with emotional support and increase confidence.

2.3 " Lucky " objects (Lucky Objects or Symbols)

Some players consider certain items auspicious.

- **Using a specific bat or shoes** – a tool for a well-performed match.
- **Jersey number** – Retaining a specific number.
- **A handkerchief or band of a specific color**
- **Considering a headband , gloves, or guard " lucky "**

Although these items do not actually produce an effect, they create positive expectations in the player's mind.

2.4 Things to avoid (Avoidance Behavior)

Part of superstition is avoiding certain things.

- **Not cutting hair or nails on a certain day**
- **Avoiding pre-match communication with a certain person**
- **Avoid negative discussions before the match**
- **Avoiding actions considered inauspicious**

This avoidance behavior gives the player the mental assurance of avoiding a potential " bad outcome . "

2.5 Team Superstitions

Sometimes the entire group follows a particular belief.

- Specific seating arrangement in the dressing room
- Entering the field after listening to the team anthem
- Maintaining the same strategy if you win in a row

This increases team cohesion .

3. Examples of Athletes and Their Superstitions

Athletes' superstitions or pre-performance routines are not just personal beliefs, but are part of their mental preparation. This is illustrated by the following examples .

3.1 **Sachin Tendulkar**

Sachin Tendulkar used to touch his bat and look up at the sky before starting his innings. Even after scoring a century, he would look up at the sky and express gratitude. This act was part of his faith and gave

him mental stability and confidence. Mental preparation is believed to have played a major role in his consistent performance.

3.2 **Rafael Nadal**

Rafael Nadal follows a specific routine before every serve. Keeping water bottles in a straight line , brushing back hair , straightening socks, etc. These actions are part of his mental concentration. A consistent routine gives him a sense of control and keeps him more focused during the match.

3.3 **Cristiano Ronaldo**

Cristiano Ronaldo enters the pitch in a specific order before a match and prays. He is also famous for his particular way of standing when taking free-kicks. These habits are considered part of his mental preparation.

3.4 **Virat Kohli**

Virat Kohli does a specific mental preparation before a match and expresses gratitude by looking up at the sky after a century. He is also seen wearing a special bracelet for some time. According to him, mental focus and positive thinking play a key role in performance.

3.5 **Serena Williams**

Serena Williams often wears the same pair of socks throughout a tournament and bounces the ball a certain number of times before serving, a habit she says helps her focus and confidence.

3.6 **Michael Jordan**

wore his college (UNC) team shorts under his uniform while playing for the Chicago Bulls. He considered himself “ lucky . ” This belief was part of his mental confidence.

The above examples illustrate that superstitions or routines are found in various sports and cultures. They provide athletes with a sense of mental stability , confidence and control. However , these practices need to be accompanied by scientific training. If properly balanced, such beliefs can be a means of mental strength.

4. Psychological Analysis

Superstitions in sports are not just traditions or habits, but are related to the mental processes of the athletes. In situations of uncertainty in competition , limited control over the outcome, and high expectations, athletes resort to various symbolic actions to maintain mental balance. The following psychological factors play an important role in the formation and persistence of superstitions .

Illusion of Control

In competitive sports, many factors are beyond the player's control — weather , referees' decisions , opponent's performance, etc. In such cases, superstitions give the player a mental sense of having some degree of control over the situation.

For example , using a “ lucky ” bat or following a specific routine can make the player feel like he is influencing the process of success. This perceived sense of control helps build confidence and reduce fear.

4.2 Anxiety Reduction (Reducing competitive stress)

Competitive anxiety is a factor that directly impacts performance. Increased nervousness before a match , negative thoughts, and fear of failure can lead to decreased concentration.

Superstitious routines act as a kind of psychological “ safety mechanism . ” Repetition of certain actions creates familiarity in the brain and reduces stress levels. As a result , the athlete can remain calmer and more focused.

4.3 Self-Confidence Boost

Self-confidence is the mainstay of excellent sports performance. When a particular action is followed by good performance , the athlete associates that action with success. Positive Expectancy is created to perform the same action the next time.

This expectation can act as a “Self-Fulfilling Prophecy” — the player feels more confident about success, leading them to play with greater determination and focus, which increases the likelihood of actually improving their performance.

4.4 Habit Formation (Formation and Stability of Habits)

The human brain loves regularity and structure. Constant repetition turns an action into a habit. Pre-performance routines are an example of such habits.

When a player performs the same actions before every match , those actions provide him with psychological stability . Habit provides stability even in the face of uncertainty , which is conducive to high performance.

4.5 Cognitive Bias and Associative Learning

Superstitions are related to "Cognitive Bias." Considering a device used after a good performance in a match as " lucky " is an example of associative learning — the brain makes the connection between success and action.

Although this relationship is not scientifically proven, it is influential in the player's mind and influences future behavior.

4.6 Self-Efficacy and Mental Strength

Self-Efficacy is the belief in one's own abilities. Superstitious routines increase Self-Efficacy to some extent , as the athlete is assured that their own preparation is complete.

This mental strength can play a positive role at crucial moments of performance.

The above psychological analysis makes it clear that superstitions are not completely unscientific or meaningless, but are related to the mental structure of the athletes. In the right amount, they increase confidence and mental stability ; however, over-reliance can lead to mental imbalance in the event of failure. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to understand superstitions as a complementary element to scientific mental training.

5. Superstition and Performance

In sports, superstition is not just a cultural or personal habit, but it can directly or indirectly affect the performance of an athlete. From a research perspective , superstition is considered to be part of a psychological process. In the right amount, it can be motivating ; however, in excess, it can have a negative impact on performance. The positive and negative effects can be analyzed in depth as follows.

Positive Effects

5.1 Psychological Stability

Uncertainty and stress are inevitable factors during competition. In such times, superstitious practices or routines provide mental support to the athlete.

Repeating a certain action creates a sense of familiarity in the brain , which helps keep the mind calm. For example , practicing in a specific way before each match or setting up equipment in a specific order creates mental stability.

This sense of stability helps control emotions during performance. Maintaining emotional balance improves decision-making and increases the likelihood of making the right decisions in stressful moments.

5.2 Increase in Self-Confidence

Confidence is the backbone of athletic performance. When a superstitious action is previously associated with success , the athlete develops positive expectations when repeating that action.

This positive expectation (Positive Expectancy Effect) increases confidence. The athlete feels confident in his or her own abilities , which is reflected in performance.

Increased confidence makes a player more aggressive , decisive, and willing to take risks — which is extremely important in high-level sports.

5.3 Improved Concentration

Superstitious routines become part of mental preparation. Performing certain actions before a match or performance reduces distracting thoughts in the mind.

This process puts the brain into " performance mode." As a result , the athlete can focus on the present moment.

Improving concentration reduces technical errors and makes decisions more accurate. This concentration is crucial, especially in high-pressure situations.

Negative Effects

5.4 Over- Dependence

The biggest danger of superstitions is their over-reliance on them. If a particular action or object is not available , the player can become mentally unsettled.

For example , if a " lucky " device is not available, confidence may be low. In such a case, the player's performance is likely to be below his actual potential.

This condition impairs mental autonomy and makes performance dependent on external factors.

5.5 Increased Anxiety

that initially reduce stress can have the opposite effect in the long run. If a routine is disrupted or the desired results are not achieved , the athlete may become more anxious.

At such times, a series of negative thoughts start running through my mind — " Today's routine was not completed , so the results will be bad. "

This mindset increases fear and distracts during performance.

5.6 Mental Instability after Failure

If failure occurs despite superstitious actions , it can affect the player's mental structure.

He starts blaming his mistakes on superstitions rather than his own skills. As a result , his confidence decreases. Sometimes, it leads to frustration , self-doubt, and a lack of motivation.

If this happens over a long period of time, the player's mental resilience can decrease.

The relationship between superstition and sports performance is complex. In the right amount, superstitions can be useful as part of mental preparation. However, they cannot replace scientific training , technical skill, and mental discipline.

That's why coaches and sports psychologists need to guide athletes in using superstitions in a balanced way. Superstitions should be complementary tools , not pillars.

6. Discussion

Superstitions in sports are not just a religious or cultural issue, but **Psychological , social, and performance-related** It is a multifaceted subject. A close study of sportspersons' behavior reveals that superstitions are not entirely unscientific or meaningless ; they often form part of the players' mental preparation. However , it is essential to scientifically analyze their nature , limitations, and consequences.

6.1 The positive side of superstition

Many players perform certain rituals before a match . For example , some cricketers pray before entering the field , some put on their pads or shoes in a specific order. These rituals result in the following:

- **Creates mental stability** – Regular activity makes the brain aware of a familiar environment , which reduces stress.
- **A sense of self-control increases** – the player feels like he can control the situation.
- **There is consistency in concentration** – the mind does not get distracted by following the same routine.
- **Positive Expectancy Effect** – The perception that " I will play well after doing this action " is created.

This sometimes leads to superstition. *Placebo Effect* — although there is no direct scientific basis for the action, it can improve mental performance.

6.2 Negative consequences and risks

Superstitions can be a psychological aid if kept in check ; but over-reliance can be dangerous:

- **Dependence on the situation increases** – the player becomes restless if that particular action cannot be performed.
- **Confidence depends on external factors** – trust in actions grows rather than one's own skills.

- **Wrong explanation of failure** – In case of defeat, the wrong reasoning is " I lost because I didn't do that action " .
- **Stress and mental instability** – If superstitions are broken, performance can decline.

This makes the players **Psychological Autonomy** There is a possibility of decrease.

6.3 Social and Cultural Factors

Indian sports culture is characterized by religious beliefs , auspicious and inauspicious signs , wearing specific colors of clothing , or the use of amulets. This is not just personal but **Effects of social influence** If other players on the team are doing something, the new player may also adopt the same action. This makes superstitions part of the " team culture " .

6.4 There is no substitute for scientific training and mental skills

Superstitions can provide psychological support ; however, they **Scientific training , physical preparation , technical skills and mental skills training** cannot be a substitute for them. Modern sports psychology emphasizes the following:

- Goal Setting
- Visualization
- Relaxation Techniques
- Self-Talk (self-talk control)
- Mindfulness

These techniques are scientifically proven and have long-term effectiveness.

6.5 The need for balance

Neither extreme positions of completely rejecting superstitions nor of completely accepting them are correct. The correct approach should be:

- Superstition if **If they provide mental stability and do not hinder performance** , they can be adopted as a personal routine.
- But on them **There should be no over-dependence.** This needs to be taken care of.
- Coaches and sports psychologists help athletes **Confidence is rooted in their skills** This needs to be explained.

7. Conclusion

Rather than seeing the superstitions of athletes as mere superstitions or traditions , they An element **of mental preparation , emotional balance and confidence building** Therefore, it would be more appropriate to understand. In competitive sports, the level of stress , expectations and uncertainty is extremely high. In such situations, certain actions , routines or beliefs provide psychological support to the athletes. Therefore, superstitions are often *Coping Mechanism* So they work.

Superstitions are mainly based on two factors:

1. **Cultural Influences** – Society , family , religious traditions, and team culture all affect the beliefs of athletes.
2. **Personal Experience** – If a particular action is followed by good performance , that action is considered a " reason for success " and further transformed into a habit.

The right amount of superstition can increase confidence , mental stability, and concentration. They give the athlete a sense of familiarity and reduce pre-competition anxiety. However , **over-reliance can be dangerous.** If a player's confidence relies on external actions rather than his skills , his performance may deteriorate in unexpected situations.

Therefore , the following balanced approach is required in the modern sports sector:

- If superstitions are not harmful, they should be accepted as a personal routine.
- scientific training , mental skill development and self-confidence should be explained to the players.
- Coaches and sports psychologists should make athletes realize that " the root of success lies in their hard work and skill . "

, it can be said that **superstitions are a part of the mental universe of athletes ; but the true pillars of long-term success are a scientific approach , confidence, and consistent practice.** Belief can inspire , but it is skill , discipline, and dedication that creates success .

8. Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following broad recommendations can be made:

8.1 Sports Psychology Training

- Players regularly **Sports Psychology Workshop** To be organized.
- anxiety management, self-talk, visualization, and relaxation techniques should be practiced.
- It should be made clear that mental preparation is as important as physical training.

8.2 Developing a scientific pre-performance routine

- Individual for each player **Scientific and Structured Pre-Performance Routine (PPR)** Should be prepared.
- should include breathing techniques , positive self-talk , goal review, and mental imagery .
- Practice the routine regularly before the competition to get used to it.

8.3 Emphasis on mental skills

- Instead of superstitions, focus on the following skills:
  - Goal Setting
  - Concentration Training
  - Emotional Control
  - Confidence Building
- Mental Skills Training (MST) should be implemented as a long-term program.

8.4 Role of trainers

- Coaches should develop a scientific approach in players.
- If superstitions are found, their causes should be understood and positive alternatives suggested.
- Create a rational and motivating environment within the team.

8.5 Counseling and psychotherapy services

- In college or sports organizations **Sports Counselor** Should be available.
- Individual counseling should be provided if there is a decline in performance or over-dependence.

8.6 Research and Evaluation

- , extent, and consequences of athletes' superstitions should be studied regularly.
- Objective conclusions should be drawn by measuring changes in performance and mental state.
- A comparative study should be conducted on the differences in the forms of superstitions according to different sports.

8.7 Family and social awareness

- Parents and family members should be explained the importance of a scientific approach.
- Care should be taken to ensure that unnecessary religious or cultural pressure is not exerted on the players.

8.8 Balanced approach

- Instead of completely rejecting all superstitions , we should accept personal routines that are not harmful to a limited extent.
- It should be consistently emphasized that the root of confidence lies not in external actions , but in skill , practice, and preparation.

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Psycho-Cultural Analysis of Myth and Culture in the Novel's Sudhir Kakar

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Abstract:

This research paper explores how Kakar fuses ancient mythology with historical and contemporary cultural realities. As both a psychoanalyst and a novelist, Kakar utilizes myths not as static relics of the past, but as "psychologically real" frameworks that govern the modern Indian unconscious. By fusing historical figures with mythical archetypes, Kakar challenges the universalism of Western psychoanalysis (notably the Freudian Oedipal construct) and proposes a culturally specific mapping of desire (kama), devotion (bhakti), and identity. As a psychoanalyst, Kakar interprets these myths through the lens of modern psychology, arguing that they represent universal human unconscious fantasies.The paper argues that Kakar's fiction does not merely reflect myth but employs it as a "psychologically real" tool to decolonize Indian psychology and map the collective unconscious of a civilization where the past and present are in constant, fluid dialogue.

Keywords*: myth,culture,ancient,psyche, psychology,spirituality ,etc.*

Myth acts as a bridge that connects ancient heritage with the rapid changes of globalization and urbanization, making complex modern dilemmas more relatable through familiar archetypes. In Indian English literature, It also acts as a "psychologically real" framework that governs the collective unconscious, providing a rich repository of symbols, moral codes, and archetypes for modern storytelling. As mythologist Devdutt Pattanaik suggests, myth is a shared understanding that binds communities together, regardless of its scientific accuracy.

In Indian English Literature,Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* retells the *Mahabharata* through Draupadi's feminist lens, reclaiming a traditionally silenced female voice. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, which utilizes the *Ramayana* as an allegory for the Gandhian struggle. Girish Karnad's *Yayati* and *The Fire and the Rain* reinterpret epic stories to scrutinize political ideas and societal standards. Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* fuses myth, history, and fiction to project ancient gods as mortals with human dilemmas.Ashwin Sanghi in his novel *The Krishna Key* , presents mythological figures as real historical people rather than purely divine entities.

Sudhir Kakar's debut novel *The Ascetic of Desire* explores Indian culture and psychology along with traditional practices ,customs,religious beliefs,myths and history ,socio-political situation ,cultural ideology of sex and psychology of the people during the reign of Rudradeva ,a feudatory of the Gupta Emperor in the sixth century through the perception of its writer.In this novel,Kakar utilizes Myth as a psychoanalytic and narrative tool to explore "Indian psyche". Moreover, it weaves together psychoanalytic techniques with ancient Indian mythology and folklore to explore the, "origins of desire". Kakar employed the myth of Vatsyayana, historical sage and author of the *Kamasutra*, to explore the tension between asceticism and eroticism in ancient India.

In *The Ascetic of Desire*, The narrator encounters Malavika during his third visit to Vatsyayana in Varanasi.Besides having suppressed sexual emotions for Malavika ,the narrator represses them because of his representational Hindu culture that does not allow him to do so rather he remembers the mythical story of Sita and Lakshmana ,who "never once raised his eyes above Sita's ankles"(61).As Kluckhohn says, 'Culture is to society what memory is to individuals",the narrator reminds of the mythical relation between Sita and Lakshmana.So, he thinks that Malavika at first is very much the Guru's wife. The character of Chandrika, Vatsyayana's aunt, reflects the myth of the enlightened courtesan in ancient India—a figure who

is not just a sexual object, but a highly educated artist, skilled in the arts of love, and often more knowledgeable than conventional society. In essence, the myths in *The Ascetic of Desire* are used to explore the psychological and cultural construction of sexuality in India, aiming to show how ancient stories and legends shape modern understandings of desire, asceticism, and identity.

Sudhir Kakar's *Ecstasy* draws heavily on the life and mystical experiences of the 19th-century saint Sri Ramakrishna Paramhamsa . By screening Ramakrishna's life through psychoanalytic views, Kakar underlines the cultural context of spirituality and how ecstatic mysticism can serve as a path for psychic transformation, challenging Western psychoanalytic explanations of such experiences as merely pathological. Kakar uses the lives of figures like Sri Ramakrishna to analyze "ecstatic mysticism".

Gopal is of different appearance,physical as well as spiritual. He sings songs in praise of Krishna.When he was only of nine years ,besides the celebration of his singing in temples ,his position of trance was motivated by the villagers.They expect his high position as Sadhus or Surdas or Kabir.So unknowingly his mother as well as Gopal himself regards his performance to the devotion of God Krishna.Moreover Kakar has shown how the cultural practices affect Gopal's mind ideally and changes his behavior actually.In both the servant bhava and madhura bhava ,his behavior is completely immersed with nature and psyche of Hanuman and Sita respectively.

When Gopal's mother raises issue of his marriage,he denies.In Indian collectivistic society,marriage is the last traces of worldliness of Indian culture that demands the attachment.Since,Gopal is remained aloof from the worldliness of Indian culture; he sweeps away all the possibilities because of the realization of mythical story of Kartikeya that makes him strong enough to become sage.The myths and folktales carry cultural ideas and values that affect individual and collectivistic psyche of society.Listening to Parvati's story,Kartikeya was astonished and decided never to marry.Similarly,in case of Gopal ,it is true,since he thinks every woman is his mother ,he cannot marry.Kakar employs the myth of Kali to explain Ramakrishna's ecstatic trances. He argues that the mystic's "regression" into a child-like state is a culturally validated return to the "Great Mother."

In Hindu culture, Guru has a distinguished place in human life.It is believed that guru leads his disciple to right path in life.The novel delves into the "mythology of the guru(Ramkrishna Paramhamsa)," a central, living myth in India, where the guru is considered a channel for divinity. Kakar has encapsulated the Hindu religious practices and cultural products that affect Gopal's mind and generate his psyche motivating him by the cultural ideas and values inculcated by myths and folktales as cultural products.

Mira and the Mahatma is a historical novel that intertwines the real-life historical figure of Mahatma Gandhi with the mythical figure of Mira (a legendary princess and devotee of Krishna). This novel employs these figures to explore the dynamics of love, devotion, and the interplay between personal desires and public asceticism.

In Indian culture especially Hindu, Mirabai, the Rajpur Princess is the mythical figure who had dedicated to Lord Krishna since childhood. "Married off at the age of thirteen into the ruling family of Mewar, Mira had refused to carry out duties of a wife. It was impossible for her to be married to the kind, she insisted, since she was already married to the lord" (48). The songs of her love, devotion and sacrifice towards God have been singing since centuries past. Here, it is worth mentioning that both the cultural ideals and culturally constructed realities such as name of Hindu religion, her passionate devotion towards Gandhiji's ideals led Madeline to celibate life because she had clarified, "I have renounced neither my family nor my religion. My religion, which lay hidden within me for thirty-three years, has now become manifest" (48).

Here, one can understand Madeline's cultural psychology as her self construal is affected by her emotions, cognitions and motivations. It can also be noted that Madeline's construal of self remains individualistic though she lived in Indian Ashram, a representative institution of cultural practices, where an individual should think about socially others as coworkers. Though Mira, the mythical figure of Indian cultural ideals had sacrificed her life for Krishna, as Madeline says, "My god has to be personal alive, a palpable presence. He has to permeate my heart, mind and body. He must fill every inch of space in and

around me, like Mirabai's Krishna. If I have that then there is no sacrifice I cannot make. There is no river, however turbulent, that I cannot cross, no work, however difficult, that I cannot do" (146). Madeline doesn't understand the myth of Mira and Krishna as cultural ideals which is pervasive and was rested upon spirituality in the collectivistic Indian society.

In the novel *The Devil Take Love*, Sudhir Kakar discloses the life of the classical Sanskrit poet Bhartrihari from Avanti . As a psychoanalyst, Kakar unveils the quintessential Indian tension between *Kama* (sensual love/desire) and *Vairagya* (renunciation). Kakar utilizes the cultural backdrop of 7th-century Ujjayini to demonstrate how myths of Shiva and the aesthetics of *Shringara Rasa* (the essence of love) dictate the protagonist's internal struggle. The novel illustrates how Bhartrihari suffered from emotional consequences and could produce invaluable cultural product, *Satakatraya* through his psyche. Kakar has successfully revealed how Bhartrihari's psyche was developed by culture of his time affecting his mind with ideas and values. Thus, the novel, *The Devil Take Love* is one of the cultural products that focus on the Indian culture and the psyche of people which is nothing but the outcome of culture itself in which they lived.

Conclusion:

Thus, Sudhir Kakar employs mythological fusion as a tool for "cultural psychoanalysis," blending ancient narratives with historical biography to map the Indian "inner world". This psycho-cultural approach treats myths as living Indian psychological realities that continue to shape modern identity, sexuality, and spirituality.

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Demythologization or Remythologization: A Study of Sita in Amish Tripathi's Sita: Warrior of Mithila

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Abstract

Myths have been perennial sources of wisdom combined with miracles with realistic situations in the human life. They are the reflections and representations of the society, culture and the common practices adopted by the members of society for the purpose of survival and progression. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are the storehouses of such myths for Indian in the subcontinent and outside it. People from the subcontinent carry the wisdom and practices communicated through these myths wherever they go and for the residents, they are part and parcel of their routine life.

Twentieth century has witnessed a proliferation of fiction based on the Ramayana and the Mahabharata where the authors tend to borrow characters, themes or settings to weave fascinating yet convincing stories to present contemporary point of view about the characters, events or themes. Amish Tripathi has been one of such authors who have influenced the readers not only in India but in all the corners of the world with his own versions of mythical characters. Sita: Warrior of Mithila (2017) is a piece of fiction in the Ram Chandra Series where he reveals character of Sita, her childhood, her education, her marriage and abduction. Amish Tripathi's mythical imagination oscillates between the past and present where it appears that contemporary characters are performing roles in the past. This paper attempts to compare facts of the Valmiki Ramayana and their exploitation by Amish Tripathi to present a Sita.

Keywords: *myths, mythologization, demythologization, remythologization, Sita, gender representation*

Introduction

Sita has been a character residing in every Indian woman. No one, irrespective of their caste, creed, religion or region, needs introduction to the character and characteristics of Sita. She is the paragon of womanhood according to Indians as she is the perfect wife, caring mother, obedient daughter, noble queen and reflects perfection in all the roles she performs as a woman. She possesses all the attributes of a perfect woman. Maharshi Valmiki presents us an example of the perfect woman suitable for the age.

Sita, as she is attributed with characteristics of ideal woman, has attracted almost every writer. Her struggle with the life which was full of ups and downs on the one hand, and her personal and social responsibility to set standards of morality on the other develop her character to the perfection which has fascinated writers and made them interpret her character to novel dimensions. Amish Tripathi is one of them who has presented Sita from the contemporary perspectives in his novel *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* (2017). In the novel, Amish challenges the traditional perspectives to look at Sita as a domestic woman meant to look after the house and hearth. He presents her as a warrior, a *Vishnu* capable of shouldering responsibility to protect the Sapt Sindhu i.e. the *Aryavarta*. He at one time de-mythifies the character of Sita at one time and at the other, he re-mythicizes it. This paper compares the Sita of Amish Tripathi with the Sita of Maharshi Valmiki from the modern mythical perspective.

Myths and Mythologization

Jan Brunvand states 'Myths, then may be defined as traditional prose narratives, which, in the society in which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past' (p. 136). According to Mircea Eliade, 'myth narrates a sacred history; it related an event that took place in primordial

time, the fabled time of the beginnings' (p. 5). For Joseph Campbell 'myths are public dreams; dreams are private myths' (p. 18). Lauri Honko believes that 'myth can encompass everything from a simple-minded, fictitious, even mendacious impression to an absolutely true and sacred account, the very reality of which far outweighs anything that ordinary life can offer'(p. 41). The very nature of myths is, in every sense defined by critics, remains fictitious though grounded into reality. They are designed to guide and humanity when there are questions of deciding what is truth and what is appropriate to the situation.

Myths present stories to guide humanity in a way that would remove their confusion and revise their perception of the facts they encounter. They are the ones mostly associated with gods and goddesses they believe, and directly show behavior of the gods and goddesses in a particular situation. Superhuman abilities are essential for being god and the ones with superhuman abilities are the creators, controllers and destroyers of the universe. With this as a belief, the mythical stories present us superhuman characters to follow them as the stories also reflect their follies. This makes them humane though they are supernatural and immortal. Myths 'teach you that you can turn inward, and you begin to get the message of the symbols. Read other people's myths, not those of your own religion, because you tend to interpret your own religion in terms of facts—but if read the other ones, you begin to get message. Myth helps you to put your mind in touch with this experience of being alive. It tells you what the experience is' (Campbell 1991, p. 10). Myths serve as experiences of our primordial ancestors and thus console us at one moment and guide on the other. The insertion of supernatural elements makes it attractive as well as humane at the same time. These motives compel the storytellers to mythologise using various narrative tools.

Demythologization and Remythologization

Myth making has been a tradition since antiquity and the motives behind mythologizing have been several—to guide, to control, to exemplify and so on. It exploited the popular system of belief across all the civilizations that gods existed even before the birth of the universe and they are the ones who created the Universe using their supernatural creative instinct. The very process of mythologization entails demythologization. Demythologization is a hermeneutic approach to mythical and religious texts to extract cosmological, sociological and historic claims from philosophical, ethical and theological teachings. It is the process used to eliminate supernatural and superhuman elements from the texts to make it appear realistic and humane.

Baruch Spinoza, in his book *Theologico-Political Treatise* (1677), argues that any event in a mythical or religious story, if inconsistent with natural laws, must be perceived as unreliable or as a metaphorical having no connection with the reality (p. 6:22). For Immanuel Kant anything that a man imagines about his abilities to perform over and above the good life-behaviour is a mere delusion (Kant 1793). It becomes essential to demythologize if one needs adequate realization and contextualization of the stories in the current contexts.

There are three ways in which demythologisation can be initiated. First is to talk about a terminological demythologisation where the actual word myth is eliminated but the account i.e. the story is retained. The content is historicised and contextualised to make it real. The motive here is surface accommodation on one hand and endorsement and validation on the other. Those, who do not want to be criticised for being atheist, and are not sure about the extremist stand they would take, tend to follow this path.

'Total and compensatory' (Honko, p. 42) is the second type of demythologisation where mythical tradition is completely rejected raising the questions of continuity of civilization before historical period, the period which started recording events in the development of civilizations. They provide hints about what might be taken instead of myths so as to give it some place in the culture. David Bidney in his article *Myth, Symbolism and Truth* (1955) states, 'Myth must be taken seriously as a cultural force but it must be taken seriously precisely in order that it may be gradually superseded in the interests of the advancement of truth and the growth of human intelligence. Normative, critical, and scientific thought provides the only self-correcting means of combating the diffusion of myth, but it may do so only on condition that we retain a firm

and uncompromising faith in the integrity of reason and in the transcultural validity of the scientific enterprise' (p. 392).

The third type of mythologization stated by Honk is '*Partial and interpretative*' where the advocates believe that 'there is no justification for believing myths quite literally. Myths are just symbols or representations for which one needs interpreters, the ones who can explain the deep meaning lying within the symbols and representations. Interpretations vary with the interpreters which in itself is a deconstructive act and possibilities of multiple interpretations reduce the myth to unstable semantic piece. Single interpretation is the recommended state of *partial interpretative* demythologisation.

Sita of Amish Tripathi: A case of demythologisation and Remythologisation

Sita: Warrior of Mithila is a novel that reinterprets the mythical character of Sita, and while doing so amalgamates many mythical concepts. Amish Tripathi exhibits not only his scholarship but also his mantle to reinterpret mythical concept of reincarnation. His Sita, except her connections with the other characters from the Valmiki Ramayana, is different from the one known and popular among the Indians and the ones who know the *Ramayana*. His interpretations and their combination with the presentation adapt the methodology of demythologisation at one moment and remythologisation at the other.

Birth of Sita

Birth of Sita is described as divine in the Ramayana. She is described as the ayonij, the one born not from the womb. She is described as *bhumija*, the daughter of earth symbolising fertility and sacred femininity. Valmiki presents a conversation between Maharshi Vishwamitra and Rajarshi Janaka in the sixty-sixth Canto of *Bala Kanda* where Janaka says

न्यासभूतं तदा न्यस्तमस्माकं पुर्वकन विभो I
अथ मे कृपात: क्षेत्रं लांग्लादुत्थिता मम I I
क्षेत्रं शोधयता लब्धा नाम्ना सीतेति विश्रुता I
भुताला दुत्थितां सा तु व्यवर्धत ममात्माजाम I I (13-14)

'And as I was ploughing the mead, arose a damsel, and as I obtained her while hallowing the field (for sacrifice), she hath come to be known by the name of Sita. And arising from the earth she grew as my daughter. And unsprung from the usual source, she was then established here as my daughter whose hand must be obtained by the bending bow.' (Dutt p. 151). The birth of Sita remains a mystery in the *Valmiki Ramayana*.

Taking benefit of doubt, Amish Tripathi reinterprets the birth myth of Sita. He weaves a convincing story of discovery of Sita by Sunaina, the queen of Mithila in a forest. A girl child 'wrapped in a rich red cloth with black stripes, was crying desperately' (Tripathi, p. 19). Surprisingly, the child was protected by a vulture which is unnatural and impracticable. The vulture fought a pack of wolves to protect the child and allowed Sunaina to take away the child.

Observation

Motive of the original story, to keep the birth of the child sacred and mysterious is maintained in both the narrations. No one knows about the parentage of Sita yet she is a fortunate girl who is found by the King in the *Valmiki Ramayana* and the Queen in the *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*. The Ramayana presents Sita as the daughter of the Earth—Bhumija. Amish maintains the mystery of birth and parentage but presents it in a practical and convincing way where the possibilities are exploited to compel readers to believe his perception. He demythologises the birth event on one hand remythologises it on the other. His movement from the original version of the birth story to his own version is rather defensive and adheres to the popular belief that Sita was born *ayonij* and her birth is divine and hence pure and sacred. Purity entails purity, and that is maintained throughout.

Sita's Education and Grooming of Character

Maharshi Valmiki, and later additions to it, belong to the ancient time when societies offered no formal education to girls. Girls and women were kept out of the stream of formal education deliberately

irrespective of their caste, creed, origin of birth and any other criterion applicable to the period. Every girl was trained to be a humble and obedient daughter, a good housewife, *pativrata*, a loving and caring mother through informal situations and examples from the society. Sita, along with her sisters, was brought up in a very cultured environment to groom her personality and character to a 'सर्वगुणोपेता' (*sarvagunopeta*), a girl endowed with all virtues (Bala Kanda 66.12).

Amish takes liberty with the enigma and shortage of details provided about formal education of Sita and presents her as a warrior. Sunaina is compelled to send Sita to the Gurukul of Shvetketu at the age of nine (Tripathi, p. 44). She spends around ten years in the Gurukul mastering skills in warfare, administration and judiciary. Surprisingly, she is accompanied by Radhika, a girl belonging to some forest tribe cultured in primitive practices.

Observation

This is an adaptation of the twentieth century educational practices in the Indian society which is a sheer contradiction to the ancient educational tradition in India. Amish Tripathi is attempting demythologise the old facts with remythologisation by exploiting contemporary practice of educating girls, even by allowing them to stay in hostels. His presentation is adaptation of contemporary practices in education to reassert scholarship and valour of women in the ancient times. In a way, he is trying to authorise the ancient practice and get sanction from the society.

Conclusion

Amish Tripathi's Sita is a representative of contemporary woman with her superhuman capacities to perform roles assigned to her in the family and society while maintaining her individual identity that converts her into a superwoman. Sita's skills at warfare and administrative are highly appreciable and remind us the skills possessed by the iron lady of India. Clarity in her vision is due to her wanderings, face to face interactions with the subject and inputs from her teachers, friends and people around. Sita acquires attributes of a superwoman in contemporary society as she is remythologised for contemporary readers, the readers who would appreciate her efforts to convert the state into *Ram Rajya* which the people around us are trying to sought.

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Female Death As Myth: Patriarchal Violence and Silence In Paula Hawkins's *Into The Water*

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Abstract

India is a culturally enrich nation where values, norms, traditions, and belief systems are carefully preserved throughout generations. Culture, as defined by Wikipedia, 'involves social behaviour, institutions, norms, knowledge, beliefs, customs, and practices shared by a society.'(Wikipedia). Within this cultural framework, traditions and beliefs give rise to myths, which are deeply affected and widely accepted by people. Indian mythology, particularly epics such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, these myths function as guiding narratives that convey knowledge, wisdom, and ethical ideals from one generation to another. However, while myths serve as cultural guides, they also construct and regulate the representation of women within patriarchal structures. This paper examines the portrayal of women in Paula Hawkins's novel Into the Water and explores how mythological narratives are used to reinforce patriarchal power by suppressing women's voices, questioning their identities, and gender roles within a male-dominated society. By analysing female characters, the study explains how myths shape the understanding of women's deaths and influence social attitudes that maintain traditional gender roles. The study shows that the repeated deaths of women in the novel are treated as myths, allowing patriarchal society to normalize violence, silence women's voices, and control their freedom.

Keywords: Women in myth, patriarchy, silencing women, violence against women, female death, gender role in society.

Objectives of the study:

1) To understand meaning of myth
2) To study myth in Paula Hawkin's Novel
3) To study theme of violence
4) To study gender role in patriarchal society

Research Methodology:

This research employs analytical and interpretative methods to analyse research articles, scholarly papers, and primary literary sources.

Concept of myth:

Myths appear in various forms such as ballads, folktales, and folk songs, and they play a significant role in shaping human culture and consciousness. Some myths are transmitted orally from early generations, while others are preserved through written traditions. In this way myth social and natural phenomena in traditional myths contain some supernatural traditional elements; God, heroes, ghosts, and witches. In an understanding of myth, it is essential to examine definitions and interpretations presented by different thinkers. Philosophers, psychologists, and scholars have studied mythology to analyse its influence on human behaviour, belief systems, and social structures. However, many writers like T. S. Eliot, Margaret Atwood, James Joyce and intellectuals have produced literary and critical works that focuses on importance of myth in understanding human experience.

According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, a myth is a story of has unknown origin that have some historical events with touch of imagination, the function of myth is "as to serve to explain some particular event, institution or natural phenomenon" (Merriam Webster).

The Andrew Lang, in *Custom and Myth*, defines mythology as "the quest for a historical condition of the human intellect to which the element in myths, regarded by us as irrational, shall seem rational enough." Partly the intellect and physic condition is still been carried along by all" (Andrew Lang)

M. H. Abhram's records in *A Glossary of literary terms/ Seventh edition*, "that myth in classical Greek, *mythos* signified any story or plot, whether true or invented. In its central modern significance, however, a myth is one story in a mythology—a system of hereditary stories of ancient origin which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group, and which served to explain (in terms of the intentions and actions of deities and other supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, to provide a rationale for social customs and observances, and to establish the sanctions for the rules by which people conduct their lives" (Abhrahms 171).

In *A Handbook of Greek Mythology*, According to Rose notes, "Myths, in the proper sense, are a somewhat primitive form of those mental processes which, further developed, give us both art and science. Of the two sides, the more active is what we may term the artistic or imaginative and visualizing process" (Rose 8).

Myths are traditional stories of having unknown origin that uses imagination to explain events, social customs, and cultural beliefs. The myths reflect the intellectual and psychological development of society.

The myth shifted from society to women:

Paula Hawkins is a renown, psychological thriller British novelist, has published a novel *Into the Water* in 2017, the novel is story of Beckford town where the story about river is spread from many several years, and many myths and beliefs grow around the Drowning Pool. Some townspeople believe that the river is enchanted and has a mysterious power. According to this myth, the river attracts woman who are emotionally or psychologically weak. Those who become obsessed with the river are slowly drawn toward it, as if the water itself calls them and offer relief from pain, worry, and tension, finally pulling them into its depths. While most townspeople blindly accept this mythic narrative of the Drowning Pool, however, writer introduces one eccentric and marginalized female character who challenges this narrative. She possesses the ability to communicate with the souls of dead women and strongly rejects the belief that the pool is enchanted. Instead, she criticizes the community, for accepting myths without questioning the reality behind them. She argues, "No one liked to think about the fact that the water in that river was infected with the blood and bile of persecuted women, unhappy women; they drank it every day" (Hawkins, 2017, p. 20) This opinion indicates that, within a patriarchal social framework, the repeated deaths of women have become normalized and accepted as part of community tradition.

Nel's death is accepted as accidental:

The death of women is a central theme of this research paper, as it is repeatedly made as myth within the narrative. Nel Abbott's death is introduced at the very beginning of the novel, who a middle-aged, independent woman, lives alone with her daughter Lena, and because of her long association with the Drowning Pool, her death is treated as an ordinary and normal event. The investigation carried out by detectives and police and even they accept the possibility of an accidental fall, noting that "she was fully clothed, and her injuries were consistent with a fall from the cliff above the pool" (Hawkins, 2017, p. 26). This uncritical acceptance reflects how female death is normalized through mythic and patriarchal narratives, where women's suffering is easily explained rather than seriously discussed by society. Nel's death, therefore, is reconstructed not as a crime but as part of a recurring myth. As everyone knew about that since from childhood, she spends much time by the riverside with parents, sister and with friends, where she develops a deep attachment to nature and enjoys photographing of natural entities. During her childhood, she narrates imaginative stories about the Drowning Pool to her sister, Julia Abbott, combining reality with myth. As an adult, Nel begins documenting the histories of women who have died in the Drowning Pool. Being a native of the town, she is aware of many such stories, of Libby Seeton, Anne Ward, Lauren Slater, and, more recently, Katie Whittaker, who is believed to have committed suicide in the pool.

The death of Nel Abbott is supposed as a crime only by her daughter and the "mad" Nickie, while all of Beckford accepts it as suicide. Nel's daughter firmly believes that, although her mother was under emotional

stress, she would never have done suicide. She therefore did not believe death of her mother is suicide and raised questions and tells the detectives, *"You don't think she fell, do you?"* (Hawkins, 2017, p. 27). Similarly, Nickie tries to convince Jules that Nel's death was not an accident. However, the community treats Nel's death as a relief from personal and social troubles and supporting that it is a culture that normalizes the disappearance of women. As Nickie observes, "Beckford is not a suicide spot. Beckford is a place to get rid of troublesome women*"* (Hawkins, 2017, p. 327)

Masculinity becomes a tool used to control and dominate women:

The novel reveals that Nel's death is not an isolated incident but part of a series of murders that are systematically disguised as suicides. Patrick Townsend, a highly respected figure in the town, had earlier murdered his wife, Lauren Slatter, by pushing her into the water after accusing her of being disloyal and involved in an extramarital affair. To protect his reputation and social standing, Patrick creates the death of Lauren is a suicide, which the town readily accepts. The investigation into Lauren's death is later taken up by Detective Sergeant Jeannie, who comes close to uncovering the truth; however, her sudden death further demonstrates how truth-seeking women are silenced.

Nel Abbott's curiosity about these mysterious deaths, involved her into Laurn's suicide case, thus her questions to Sean because, the people of the town said he is eye witness of her mother's death, which remains a disturbing mystery for her. Sean, however, continues to believe the childhood narrative which was imposed by his father, as he is equally invested in protecting him. His guilt and involvement are revealed in his confession: "I was the boy who watched his mother die and said nothing. I was the boy, the teenager, the man who protected her killer, lived with her killer, and loved him" (Hawkins, 2017, p. 425). This statement reflects Sean's self-involvement in preserving patriarchal power by hiding male violence. So, when Nel comes close to revealing the truth, Sean kills her to protect the false story. By pushing Nel into the water, he converted another act of murder into a suicide, it emphasizing the patriarchal reconstruction of female death within the social mythology of Beckford.

During the investigation of Nel Abbott's death, Detective Erin Morgan faces verbal abuse and pressure from Patrick Townsend. Patrick is worried about his son and tries to stop the investigation. He strongly claims, "My son has done nothing," and then threatens Erin by saying, "So if you make trouble for him, girlie, I'll make trouble for you. Do you understand that? You'll get back with interest" (Hawkins, 2017, p. 392). This incident shows how male power is used to silence women and control the truth. By frightening a female detective, Patrick helps to protect the false story of suicide and ensures that violence against women remains hidden.

In this way, the deaths of women are acts of male violence that are presented as suicide with the help of myth.

Conclusion:

In *Into the Water*, male characters are shown as powerful and respected members of society who attempt to control situations and, especially, women. When women question them or try to seek truth, men use their social power to silence them, either through threats or immoral actions because the society is male-dominated, such questions remain unanswered, and injustice continues. In such a society women appear vulnerable and are often forced to protect their existence by accepting social norms and cultural beliefs. This supports, the patriarchal control and allows violence against women which remain hidden. *Into the Water* shows how the deaths of women are turned into myths that it supports male power. The murders are shown as suicides, and violence is treated as their destiny, which hides the real suffering of women. Through this, the novel criticizes a society that protects men and ignores violence, and injustice done by men to women. Paula Hawkins encourages readers to question such accepted stories and understand how myths are used to hide violence against women.

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Shobhan Bantwal's The Dowry Bride: A Study in Dowry Myth

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Abstract

Shobhan Bantwal's The Dowry Bride *offers a touching investigation of the deep-rooted dowry system in Indian culture, revealing the myths and strict certainties surrounding this social practice. The novel centers on the life of Megha, a young female who scarcely escapes an attempted killing arranged by her hubby and in-laws over an inadequate dowry. Through Megha's journey of existence, fight, and liberation, Bantwal dismantles the old-fashioned explanation of dowry as a social standard or representation of matrimonial honour. This paper analyses how the story encounters the so-called "dowry myth"—the belief that dowry ensures economic security, family agreement, or communal status. By representing the passionate, psychosomatic, and bodily disturbance imposed upon females, the novel evaluates male-controlled organizations and interrogations the involvement of females in preserving the system. The paper also travels how Bantwal uses narrative to advocate for female agency and socio-cultural reform. Thus, the novel serves as both a social document and a feminist critique, reflecting the urgent need to dismantle oppressive traditions masquerading as cultural heritage.*

Keywords: *Dowry system, Indian fiction, Shobhan Bantwal, gender violence, feminist literature, patriarchy, women's empowerment, cultural myths,* The Dowry Bride*, social critique.*

Introduction:

This paper explores the subject of wedding gift and its traditional entrenchment as symbolised in Shobhan Bantwal's novel *The Dowry Bride (2007*). The novel climaxes the dismays of dowry ferocity although all together stimulating the fable that dowry is a simple ritual empty of damage. Using a radical fictional lens, this paper scans how Bantwal criticises the communal customs that continue the dowry structure in India, and evaluations the male-controlled organisations that permit gender-based domination. Portrayal from together fictional examination and socio-cultural explanation, this study positions *The Dowry Bride* as an influential tale in contradiction of the myth of kind dowry performs.

The practice of dowry in India, though legally banned by the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, continues to persist in both overt and covert forms. Often rationalized as tradition or familial custom, dowry becomes a site of conflict, exploitation, and even violence. Literature, as a reflection and critique of society, becomes a potent medium to challenge such social evils. Shobhan Bantwal, in her debut novel *The Dowry Bride* (2007), unmasks the deeply embedded cultural myth that dowry is harmless, instead portraying it as a practice that endangers the lives of countless women. Indian born American 21st century female writer Shobhan Bantwal has an influence of Indian as well as Greek, Roman, and Arabian myths. Myths, legends folklore, and folk literature are the main source of literature mythological fiction is a different genre and can be studied separately but while discussing about the influence and reflection of myths in the present writers and their writing is the main aim of this paper. In the present paper an honest attempt is made to relate Shobhan Bantwal's

The Dowry Bride is a reflection of dowry myth. The big tradition of Indian society from the long back and probably from and before the Vedic period of Indian social and cultural history. Now let's see what is mythology, it is a collection and study of Myth stories that a culture refers to explain the origin of the world, natural phenomenon, human behaviour and belief. A very simple definition "Mythology is a set of old stories or legends often involving Gods Goddesses Heroes and Supernatural beings which express the values and

belief of culture" the word mythology emerged from Greek words 'mythos' meaning story and logos meaning word or study this way Hindu mythology or Indian mythology means stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata. It is the stories of deities like Shiva, Vishnu, and Krishna. The main purpose of mythology is to explain the creation of world, to teach a moral lesson, to preserve cultural history, to show tradition and to represent religious belief. Dowry is a fashion and a social system that is carried out by our fore fathers to keep their prestige and proud of family. Definition of dowry" dowry refers to the property money or valuable goods that a bride's family gives to the groom or his family as part of marriage arrangement" as per dowry prohibition Act 1961 India dowry means any property or valuable security given or agree to be given either directly or indirectly paradoxically dowry is illegal in India. It is a considered social evil and a punishable offence under IPC but now a day it become a fashion and given as a gift voluntarily not demanded. It is said that and proved that literature is mirror of society or mirror to societies. So writer and creative man and women are medium to show Bantwal is one of them to show such picture of dowry system in India. The novels of Shoban Bantwal refer to work of contemporary literature that sometime cross division between literary and fantasy fiction Nitish fiction based on mythology it often refers to mythological person's prototype archetype the following discussion shows how successfully

Bantwal referred different but mostly dowry means in her novel with special reference to dowry bride. The story of the dowry bride highlight on the evil and illegal system in India Indian tradition to give money or gift to the groom in the marriage the story. *The Dowry Bride* shed light on the illegal system in India tradition to pay gift to groom in the marriage the main character in this novel is Ramnath in modern period middle class country like India Meghna Ramnath is 20 years old bride of 1 year she is awaken from her tire some sleep to find her husband and mother in laws planning a death for her mother in laws is angry about Mega dowry which has not reached at the midnight mother in law Chandramma preferred the educated and beautiful young women for charm and dowry. It was her destiny to bring this event in her life she re she ran away from her mother in laws and text a shelter in one of the relatives. It was impossible to shy and spend time in relative's home without knowing her parents. She knew that if she informs her parent they will forcibly send her to loss home. It was like a hell to stay there during the night of racing, she reached home of her relatives where she feels safe but it was not like that to spend with young male even to believe on a young female for shelter.

Dowry as Cultural Myth: In traditional Indian society, dowry is often seen as a token of goodwill—a gift from the bride's family to the groom. However, this so-called 'gift' has evolved into a coercive demand. Bantwal challenges the sanitized portrayal of dowry, using her protagonist, Megha, to represent the lived realities of many Indian women. From the beginning of the novel, Megha's life is shaped by the dowry system. Married off at seventeen to Suresh, she becomes the victim of emotional and psychological abuse due to her family's inability to provide continued financial support post-marriage (Bantwal 14). The myth that dowry is only a financial arrangement is shattered when Megha learns of her in-laws' plot to kill her. "Dowry is a deeply entrenched material practice that transforms women into assets or liabilities" (Oldenburg 119).

The Feminist Lens: Resistance and Agency: Megha's character evolution is central to the feminist reading of the novel. Initially portrayed as submissive and domesticated, Megha's escape from her abusive household signifies a rupture in the cycle of dowry-based oppression. Her journey from victim to survivor represents resistance against the dowry system and patriarchal control. "Megha's arranged marriage had always felt like a transaction rather than a relationship" (Bantwal 14).

As Simone de Beauvoir posits in *The Second Sex*, a woman becomes 'the Other' in patriarchal societies (Beauvoir 267). Megha, too, is reduced to her monetary value, denied autonomy until she defies expectations. Her rebellion subverts the myth that women must silently endure familial abuse.

Societal Silence and Normalization of Violence: One of the most haunting elements of the novel is the normalization of domestic abuse under the guise of tradition. The community's complicity is revealed through the absence of support for Megha. Her friend and confidante, Deepak, becomes an exception—offering her sanctuary and respect (Bantwal 97). Through Deepak, Bantwal introduces the idea that male

allies can aid in dismantling oppressive systems, though the burden of survival still falls disproportionately on women. "She had no one to turn to, not even her own family. Her silence was dictated by fear" (Bantwal 53).

Economic Exploitation and Patriarchal Control: The dowry system perpetuates a commodification of women. In The Dowry Bride, Bantwal critiques this through the transactional nature of Megha's marriage. Her in-laws' greed is not isolated—it reflects a larger social acceptance of dowry as a means of upward mobility. As sociologist Veena Talwar Oldenburg notes, dowry is "a deeply entrenched material practice" that transforms women into "economic burdens or assets" (Oldenburg 119). Bantwal echoes this analysis, showing how Megha's worth is determined by the cash and goods she brings to the marriage.

Breaking the Cycle: Hope and Empowerment-Despite the grim realities, Bantwal offers hope. Megha's decision to educate herself, seek employment, and redefine her identity signifies empowerment. Her final rejection of the myth that women must conform to submissive roles is an act of feminist defiance. "By escaping her home, Megha made the first move toward reclaiming her identity" (Bantwal 112).

The novel's ending, though romanticized, suggests that personal resilience can challenge oppressive traditions. It also invites discourse on the importance of socio-legal reform and public awareness.

Conclusion:

Shobhan Bantwal's *The Dowry Bride* presents a powerful study of the dowry myth by exposing how a tradition meant to secure a woman's future often becomes a source of exploitation and suffering. Through the experiences of the protagonist, the novel reveals how dowry turns marriage into a transaction, reducing women to commodities valued for wealth rather than individuality. Bantwal highlights the emotional, psychological, and social pressures placed on women and their families, showing how deeply rooted patriarchal norms sustain this practice. The novel ultimately challenges the myth that dowry ensures marital happiness, instead portraying it as a system that reinforces inequality and injustice**.**

The Dowry Bride is a poignant narrative that interrogates the myth of dowry as a benign custom. Through Megha's story, Shobhan Bantwal critiques the economic, cultural, and gendered violence that dowry enables. The novel functions as both a social document and a feminist text—offering resistance, empowerment, and hope. As long as the dowry system persists in any form, works like Bantwal's remain essential in exposing its myths and advocating for justice. The main purpose of the paper is to abolish the dowry system from the society.

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From Myth to Modernity: A Study of Marriage in Indian Tradition

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Abstract:

Indian mythology is very old and important. It tells us many stories about life and values. These stories still influence people today. Marriage is one of the most important ideas shown in Indian mythology. In Hindu culture, marriage is seen as a sacred and special bond.

This research paper talks about marriage in some mythological stories and compares it with marriage in modern times. In mythology, marriage teaches love, duty, respect, and togetherness. Modern marriages are different in many ways because society is changing. This study shows the differences between marriages in mythology and marriages today.

The paper also talks about some wrong ideas found in present-day society, such as honor killing and problems with inter caste marriage. It asks whether such acts are really part of Hindu culture or mythology. The study explains that Indian mythology teaches kindness, understanding, and respect in marriage. Many problems seen today are not from mythology but from misunderstandings. This paper shows that we should learn good values from mythology to build a better and more caring society.

Keywords: *Indian Mythology, Marriage, Modern Times, Society, Inter caste*

Introduction:

Indian mythology is widely known as Hindu mythology and Hindu mythology is not just mythology but a culture .One of the most unique traditions in Hindu mythology is the marriage tradition. The marriage system in Hindu mythology is different from other mythologies or religions. In other religions, marriage is a contract, but in Hinduism or Hindu mythology, it is a sacrament/bond that lasts for seven lifetimes. This tradition and belief remain strong even in today's modern age of divorce. However, when we come to our main subject, we understand the differences between present-day Hindu marriages and those of the past, and whether honor killing is truly justified. Our research paper is divided into sections to explore the answers to these questions.

1] What is marriage? (According to Hindu mythology)
2] Types of marriages.
3] Modern age marriages.

What is Marriage? [According to Hindu Mythology]

According to Hindu mythology marriage is a social, permanent religious sacrament fulfilling dharma (duty), kama (pleasure), and procreation, uniting 2 souls and families through specific rituals often centered around the sacred fire. A bond for 7 Births for spiritual and social purpose.

8 Types of marriages in Hindu mythology:

1] Brahma Vivah
2] Daiva Vivah
3] Gandharva Vivah
4] Prajapati Vivah
5] Asura Vivah
6] Rakshasa Vivah
8] Paishach Vivah

These are the eight types of marriages in Hindu mythology. Each marriage has its own feature/ uniqueness. But, GANDHARVA Vivah is very important for our research paper. Research scholar has deeply studied GANDHARVA Vivah / Marriage.

GANDHARVA Vivah /marriage.

GANDHARVA Vivah / Marriage is also known as love marriage, occurs when a couple chooses to marry out of love and personal choice, without following traditional ceremony. The couple may elope or marry informally, based on their mutual affection and consent. Many traditions recognize it as a valid form of marriage.

After studying these 8 types of marriages, especially, GANDHARVA marriage research scholar came to know that, Indian mythology also had freedom of marriage. Many communities have been living in India since pre historical period. Many castes (Varna at that time) exist in Hinduism. These castes existed even then. Therefore, after studying Indian mythology, it is understood that inter caste marriages used to take place in Hindu religion. Now we are going to study these marriages.

2 Types of inter caste marriage:

1] ANULOM marriages: It means, a man belongs to so called higher caste marries with the woman belong to so called lower caste.

2) PRATILOM marriage: It means, a man belong to so called lower caste marries with woman,belongs to so called higher caste.

This is not theoretical definition only, printed in Mythological books but research scholar can prove it with solid and suitable examples.

Examples:

1] LORD KRISHNA AND JAMBAVATI - Lord Krishna was born into the Yadav clan and a Kshatriya. but married with tribal Woman Jambavati.

2] BHIMA and HIDIMBA - Bhima (Kshatriya/Pandav) Married with the Rakshasi princess Hidimba.

3] King YAYATI and DEVYANI - A Kshatriya king Married with the daughter of the Sage Shukracharya, a Brahmin

4] Sage CHYAVANYA and SUKANYA- Sage Chyavana Married the Kshatriya daughter of king Sharyati.

5] King SHANTANU and SATYAVATI -: The Kuru King (Kshatriya) married Satyavati daughter of a fisherman. (lower caste) (PARAVAR caste).

Furthermore, the research scholar observed that, the castes that exist today also existed in ancient times, but there wasn't as much rigidity regarding inter-caste marriages. In fact, even our deities performed inter-caste marriages (inter-Varna marriages). Evidence supporting this can be found even in the Bhagavad Gita, the most sacred text of HINDUISM.

<u>BHAGAVAD GITA- chapter 1 verse 40-41</u>

<u>Chapter 2 verse 3</u>

In the first chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, in verses 40 and 41, Arjuna raises concerns about the negative consequences of inter-caste marriage on lineage transmission. In response, Lord Krishna says:

"O Parth, it does not befit you to yield to this unmanliness, give up such petty weakness of heart and arise, O vanquisher of enemies"

"Hence, we have to flush out our thoughts on inter caste marriage as God strictly punishes those who carry this cheap misconception!"

Marriages in modern Age:

Now we will study marriages in the modern period. As we progress through time while studying marriages in Hindu culture, we understand that the marriage system in Hindu culture became more rigid. People's inclination towards endogamy (marriage within the same caste) increased.

One reason for this is that earlier, the caste system was based on karma (professions), but in later times it became based on birth. This led to an increase in caste superiority (pride in one's own caste). As a result, the upper classes in the social hierarchy began to look down upon the lower castes and avoided marital relations with them. However, as time progressed, changes began to occur. This change is largely noticeable in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. The number of GANDHARVA marriages (love marriages) increased significantly. Brides and grooms in GANDHARVA marriages began to give less importance to their own and their partner's caste.

People started choosing their partners based on their profession (just like mythological period).

Girls began to prioritize choosing their own partners (SWAYAMVAR), irrespective of caste.

According to the reports of 2023, 44% of marriages in India are GANDHARVA Vivahas [love marriage].

Although this matter is entirely positive and not contrary to our Hindu religion, some wrong things are happening due to ignorance and false pride associated with caste. For example, honor killings resulting from inter-caste marriages. As researchers have observed, the marriage system became rigid over time. Since caste became based on birth, people from the upper castes of society and their families began to refuse marriage alliances with people from lower castes However, in GANDHARVA marriage (love marriage), sometimes the boy or girl belongs to a lower caste. In such cases, the upper-caste family opposes the marriage. Despite this, the two life partners decide to live together. But at this point, the family's false pride in their caste is challenged, and they kill their daughter or son and their partner.

According to the reports in 2022, about 145 honor killing incident occurred in 2017-2019.

Conclusion:

As observed by the research scholar, this was a study of Indian mythological and modern marriages. While conducting this study, the research scholar found both, similarities and differences, between the two marriage systems. He observed freedom in mythological marriages, but rigidity based on caste in modern-day marriages. The problem of honor killings, in particular, was found to be widespread. However, the study reveals that Hindu mythology allowed for intercaste marriages, and that excessive pride in one's own caste is an exaggeration. According to Hindu mythology, caste or Varna is based on karma, not birth. Therefore, what contribution do we have to the caste into which we are born? Then how can we be proud of things in which we have no contribution! If we understand this, we can solve the problems in the modern-age marriage system and bring more freedom to marriages, in accordance with our mythological traditions.

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Myth and Spiritual Symbolism in Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*

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Abstract

Present research paper highlights the influence of Indian tradition, myth, religion and philosophy on modern spiritual narrative through Hermann Hesse's Siddhartha (1922). Spiritual quest, renunciation, and enlightenment are associated with Hinduism and Buddhism. This paper examines how Hesse adapts Indian myths and symbols like -character of Buddha, the motif of the wandering sanyasi, and the river as a cosmic symbol—to express a modern, individualistic vision of self-realization. The study argues that Siddhartha presents modern form of spirituality and myth, where ancient symbols are used to present day problem of society like alienation, the limits of institutional religion, and the search for firsthand experience.

Key Words: *Myth, Spiritual Quest, River Symbolism, Enlightenment, Hermann Hesse, Siddhartha*

Introduction

Modern literature frequently uses ancient myths to explore spiritual and psychological dilemmas of contemporary society. Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* is one of the best examples of the reinterpretation of myth. This novel was written during the post-World War I period. The novel reflects the disillusionment and alienation of modern people. Hesse presents the spiritual awakening of protagonist. Though the novel borrows names, settings, and symbols from Hinduism and Buddhism, it does not intend to reproduce orthodox religious teachings. Instead, it reshapes mythic patterns into a modern philosophical parable centered on individual experience. This paper explores how mythical symbols are used in *Siddhartha.*

Concept of Myth

Myth is no longer considered as a false or primitive story in literary and cultural studies, but it is understood as a symbolic narrative that expresses fundamental truths about human existence. Modern critics sees myth as a powerful imaginative structure through which societies expresses their deepest desires, wishes, fears, beliefs, and values. Northrop Frye says in his book 'Anatomy of Criticism' says,

"Myth is the structural principle of literature." (p.34)

According to him, mythic patterns such as death and rebirth, the quest, fall and rise and the journey of the hero gave shape to literature narratives. It means myth provides basic patterns which teach about life and shapes the literature. For Jung, mythic figures such as person with super power, the seeker, the wise old man, the mother, and the enlightened sage represent psychological realities shared by all human beings across cultures. Carl Jung states in his book *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* states that,

"Myths are original revelations of the pre-conscious psyche…"(p.18)

He views myths as expressions of archetypes arising from the collective unconscious. Hesse's *Siddhartha* also follows same pattern such as hero's journey, rejection, temptation, fall, and enlightenment—into a modern narrative of self-discovery. The novel is all about spiritual quest of protagonist, renunciation, temptation, enlightenment and self discovery. Hesse has presented Indian religious myths in symbolic patterns that articulate the modern individual's inward journey towards self-realization. Hence, myth in *Siddhartha* functions as both a narrative structure and a symbolic language through which spiritual experience is expressed in a modern literary form.

Myth in *Siddhartha*

Myth of the quest founds in many religions. In novel , Sidhartha's journey presents his quest. He left home in search knowledge through self experience. In this journey he suffered a lot but eventually found wisdom. His journey as a young boy of Brahmin who gives importance to materialistic life to spirituality aligns Siddhartha with mythological figures of saints and mendicants who has refused worldly attachments

and temptations to achieve ultimate truth of life. Hesse prefers to gain knowledge from personal experience not from philosophical books. Sanyasi, medicant, and saints these personalities are very famous in Indian mythology. They taught society about spirituality. They left the materialistic life in search of self discovery. Protagonist of *Sidhartha* walked on same path. He refused comfortable family life , wealth, prestige and worldly pleasure. Yet, unlike traditional ascetics who seek liberation through strict discipline, Siddhartha ultimately realizes that neither extreme asceticism nor indulgence alone leads to enlightenment. Though Hermann Hesse supports the ideal of abandonment in spiritual awakening, but reject the rigid and strict religious paths. He presented term refusal of worldly attachments is just a one phase in the life of human beings. It is not an end of everything. The figure of the renouncer or ascetic (sanyasi) who abandons domestic life in search of spiritual truth is a recurring archetype in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain narratives. Such figures are often represented as spiritually superior to householders, embodying the ideal of detachment from material desire. In *Siddhartha*, Hermann Hesse draws upon this mythic archetype of renunciation but reshapes it to reflect a modern, experiential understanding of spirituality.

Hesse has presented traditional mythic pattern of renunciation through the decision of Sidhartha . he has decided to leave his family life join the Samanas. He followed the life style of Indian sages who practices fasting, meditation, simple life to overcome human vices like ego, jealousy, treachery and anger. However, Hesse does not present asceticism as an ultimate spiritual solution. Siddhartha gradually becomes aware that extreme self-denial merely suppresses the self without truly overcoming desire. This realization marks a critical departure from traditional ascetic myths. Novel presents Sidhartha's holistic understanding of life as a beautiful phase of life because he experienced everything like common man - love, wealth, and emotional suffering and finally gained spiritual satisfaction through self discovery. Siddhartha acquires experiential knowledge that pure ascetic discipline could not provide. Ultimately, the novel redefines the myth of renunciation by integrating it into a broader spiritual journey. Sidhartha gained true knowledge from deep acceptance and understanding of human values not from rejection of human values.

River in the novel used as powerful mythical symbol . In mythology, river presented as pure, sacred form of water which associated with purification, continuity, cyclical time, and the unity of life. In the novel plays role of spiritual guide to Siddhartha. River taught him value of silence and continuity in work. Siddhartha learns to listen to the river, and in its many voices he hears the unity of all experiences—joy and sorrow, birth and death, desire and renunciation. Siddhartha's final state of serenity by the river reflects a balanced form of renunciation—one rooted in inner freedom rather than outward withdrawal. Furthermore, the river plays a role in Siddhartha's symbolic rebirth. When disappointed from life he stands by the river to end his life but the voice of river gave him strength and positivity.

Hermann Hesse has used figure of Gotama, the Buddha as a powerful mythical symbol. Gigure of Gotama presented as a symbol of serene and spiritual perfect person. In Buddhism Gotama worshiped as Guru of discipline who encourages to walk on sacred path of life. In the novel Siddhartha met Gotama but he refused to became a students of Gotama. Siddhartha believes that spiritual awakening is the matter of self discovery all things cannot be learnt through teaching. It breaks the traditional relationship between teacher and student. Myth in *Siddhartha* thus becomes a flexible symbolic language through which modern spiritual alienation and the search for meaning are articulated.

Conclusion

Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* demonstrate how myth can be creatively adapted in modern literature to address contemporary spiritual and existential concerns. Portrayal of Indian religious myths and archetypes—the quest motif, renunciation, the enlightened sage, and the sacred river—Hesse constructs a modern spiritual parable centered on personal experience and inner realization. The novel neither rejects myth nor accepts it uncritically; instead, it transforms myth into a vehicle for modern self-discovery. *Siddhartha* can therefore be read as a modern spiritual myth that bridges ancient symbolic traditions with the psychological and philosophical questions of the twentieth century. Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* stands as a powerful example of how myth can be creatively reinterpreted in modern literature to address contemporary

spiritual and existential concerns. The novel demonstrates that myth in modern fiction does not function as a rigid system of belief but as a flexible symbolic language capable of expressing inner psychological and spiritual realities. By reshaping traditional mythic patterns to emphasize personal experience over doctrinal learning, Hesse bridges ancient Eastern spirituality with modern Western individualism. Siddhartha's journey affirms that enlightenment is not achieved through blind adherence to tradition or extreme asceticism, but through the integration of all aspects of life—suffering and joy, renunciation and engagement, solitude and relationship. The novel suggests that myth continues to possess enduring relevance, offering not escapist fantasy but profound insight into the timeless patterns of human existence. Through its mythic symbolism, *Siddhartha* invites readers to reflect on their own spiritual journeys and the possibility of achieving harmony within a fragmented modern world.

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Gender, Dharma, and Identity in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata

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Introduction:

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are two of the greatest epics of ancient Indian literature. They are not merely mythological narratives but cultural texts that have shaped the social, moral, and ethical framework of Indian society for centuries. These epics present complex portrayals of kingship, dharma (duty), war, family, and morality. Among the most significant aspects of these narratives is the representation of women. Women in both epics occupy central positions, influencing events and shaping destinies, yet they often function within deeply patriarchal structures.

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are two of the greatest epics of Indian literature and occupy a central place in the cultural, moral, and social life of India. Traditionally attributed to sage Valmiki and sage Vyasa respectively, these epics are not merely stories of kings, wars, and heroes but also serve as mirrors of ancient Indian society. They reflect social values, moral codes, family structures, political responsibilities, religious beliefs, and the position of women within a patriarchal framework. For centuries, these texts have influenced Indian thought, shaping ideals of duty, sacrifice, honor, righteousness, and social conduct.

The Ramayana, traditionally attributed to Valmiki, narrates the story of Lord Rama, his wife Sita, and the battle against Ravana. The Mahabharata, attributed to Vyasa, is a vast narrative centered on the conflict between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. While both epics focus primarily on male heroes, women play decisive roles in determining the course of events. Their experiences reflect both reverence and restriction, power and subordination.

This research paper critically examines the role of women in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. It explores how female characters are portrayed, how they negotiate their identities within patriarchal frameworks, and how their actions influence the larger narrative. By comparing key female figures such as Sita, Kaikeyi, and Shurpanakha in the Ramayana, and Draupadi, Kunti, and Gandhari in the Mahabharata, this study highlights the similarities and differences in their representation. It also analyzes themes of patriarchy, gender inequality, agency, sacrifice, and resistance.

In the Ramayana, Sita is often portrayed as the embodiment of ideal womanhood—devoted, pure, and self-sacrificing. Her life is shaped by obedience and suffering, culminating in the trial by fire (Agni Pariksha) and eventual exile. However, beneath this submissive exterior lies moral strength and dignity. Kaikeyi, another important female character, disrupts the narrative through her demand that Rama be exiled, showing that women can influence political power. Shurpanakha represents desire and female sexuality, but her portrayal also reveals how female autonomy is punished.

In contrast, the Mahabharata presents women with more overt political and emotional agency. Draupadi's humiliation in the dice game becomes the turning point of the epic war. Her voice, anger, and demand for justice challenge male authority. Kunti, as the mother of the Pandavas, makes strategic decisions that affect the fate of kingdoms. Gandhari's blindfold symbolizes both loyalty and silent protest against patriarchal injustice.

Through these characters, the epics reveal the complex position of women in ancient Indian society. Women are respected as mothers, wives, and symbols of honor, yet they are often denied autonomy over their own lives. Their bodies and choices become sites of political and moral conflict. This study critically evaluates these contradictions and seeks to understand how the portrayal of women in these epics continues to influence contemporary gender discourse.

Ultimately, the role of women in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata cannot be reduced to simple categories of victimhood or empowerment. Instead, they represent a spectrum of experiences—devotion and defiance, silence and speech, sacrifice and resistance. A critical study of these epics helps in understanding both the historical roots of patriarchy and the enduring strength of female agency within cultural narratives.

These epics were composed in a historical context where social hierarchy and gender roles were clearly defined. Men were often associated with power, warfare, and governance, while women were expected to maintain family harmony, support their husbands, and preserve moral discipline. However, the epics do not present women as completely silent or powerless. Instead, they portray women as emotionally strong, intellectually capable, and morally conscious individuals whose presence is essential to the development of the narrative.

Although both epics largely focus on male heroism, royal duty, and warfare, women play a vital role in shaping the narrative and moral vision of the texts. Female characters are not only mothers, wives, and daughters but also advisors, moral guides, emotional anchors, and at times catalysts of major historical events. Their actions directly influence the destiny of kingdoms and families. Many turning points in both epics are directly connected to decisions, suffering, or humiliation experienced by women.

Keywords: Ramayana; Mahabharata; Women in Epics; Patriarchy; Gender Inequality; Sita; Draupadi; Feminist Criticism, Dharma.

Comparative Study of Women in Both Epics

A comparative study of women in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata reveals both similarities and differences in their characterization and narrative function.

In the Ramayana, Sita is the central female figure. She embodies the ideal wife who follows her husband into exile and remains loyal despite immense suffering. Her character represents purity, devotion, and endurance. However, her repeated trials reflect the vulnerability of women within patriarchal society. Sita's life is governed by the decisions of men—her marriage, exile, and final abandonment are all determined by Rama's commitment to royal duty.

Kaikeyi demonstrates another dimension of womanhood. Initially portrayed as loving and brave, she later becomes the catalyst for Rama's exile. Her desire to secure the throne for her son Bharata reflects maternal ambition and political awareness. However, her assertiveness is framed negatively, suggesting that female intervention in politics is disruptive.

Shurpanakha represents marginalized female desire. Her open expression of love for Rama challenges social norms, and her mutilation symbolizes the punishment of female sexuality outside accepted boundaries.

In the Mahabharata, women are more directly involved in political events. Draupadi is one of the most powerful female characters in Indian literature. Her public humiliation in the Kauravas court becomes the moral justification for war. Unlike Sita, Draupadi questions authority and demands justice. She openly challenges the elders in the court, asking whether Yudhishthira had the right to stake her in the dice game. Her voice symbolizes resistance against injustice.

Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, demonstrates resilience and strategic wisdom. Her decision to share Draupadi among her sons reflects the complexities of maternal authority and social norms. Gandhari, who blindfolds herself in solidarity with her blind husband Dhritarashtra, represents loyalty but also silent protest. Her curse upon Krishna after the war shows her moral power.

While the Ramayana emphasizes feminine ideals of obedience and chastity, the Mahabharata presents women as more assertive and politically conscious. However, both epics ultimately reinforce male dominance. Women influence events but rarely control their own destinies.

Patriarchy and Gender Inequality

Patriarchy forms the structural foundation of both epics. Social expectations confine women to roles of wife, mother, and daughter. Their identity is often defined in relation to male figures.

In the Ramayana, Sita's purity becomes a matter of public concern. Rama's decision to exile her, despite knowing her innocence, reflects the prioritization of royal reputation over a woman's dignity. This

episode illustrates how women bear the burden of maintaining family honour. Gender inequality is evident in the unequal standards of morality applied to men and women.

Similarly, in the Mahabharata, Draupadi's humiliation exposes the objectification of women. She is treated as property that can be gambled away. The silence of respected elders during her disrobing reveals societal complicity in gender injustice. Although divine intervention saves her, the incident highlights the vulnerability of women.

Marriage practices in both epics also reflect patriarchy. Women are often married for political alliances. Their consent is rarely central. Even strong characters like Kunti and Gandhari are bound by marital duty.

However, these epics also contain moments of resistance. Draupadi's questioning of the court challenges patriarchal norms. Sita's final refusal to return to Rama and her decision to return to Mother Earth can be interpreted as an act of self-assertion. Gandhari's curse reflects moral authority beyond domestic boundaries.

Thus, while patriarchy dominates both epics, women are not merely passive victims. They negotiate power within limitations and sometimes subvert expectations.

Conclusion:

The portrayal of women in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata reflects the complexities of ancient Indian society. Women are revered as symbols of virtue, strength, and sacrifice, yet they are constrained by patriarchal norms. Through characters like Sita and Draupadi, the epics present contrasting models of femininity—one rooted in endurance and the other in assertive resistance.

The Ramayana primarily upholds the ideal of the devoted and self-sacrificing wife. Sita's life becomes a testimony to the expectations placed upon women. However, her moral strength and final act of withdrawal suggest inner autonomy. In contrast, the Mahabharata presents women who actively question injustice and participate in political discourse. Draupadi's voice, Kunti's strategic wisdom, and Gandhari's moral authority expand the scope of female agency.

Despite these differences, both epics reveal deep-rooted gender inequality. Women's bodies become sites of honor and humiliation. Their choices are often shaped by male authority. Yet, within these constraints, women exercise influence and demonstrate resilience.

A critical study of these epics from a gender perspective enables a deeper understanding of how cultural narratives shape social attitudes toward women. The continued relevance of Sita and Draupadi in contemporary debates about gender roles indicates the enduring power of these characters. They serve as both models and mirrors—reflecting societal ideals while also challenging injustice.

In conclusion, the role of women in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata is multifaceted and dynamic. These epics do not present a single image of womanhood but a spectrum of experiences. By critically examining these representations, we gain insight into the historical construction of gender roles and the ongoing struggle for equality and dignity.

The continued relevance of these epic women in modern cultural imagination further emphasizes the importance of critical engagement. Figures like Sita and Draupadi remain powerful symbols in contemporary debates about gender roles, marital expectations, and female honor. By reinterpreting these characters through modern critical frameworks, scholars can uncover new meanings that challenge traditional patriarchal readings and highlight women's resilience and agency.

Ultimately, this study concludes that the role of women in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata cannot be reduced to simple categories of submission or empowerment. Instead, it must be understood as a dynamic interplay between restriction and resistance, idealization and individuality, silence and speech. These epics portray women as both products of their socio-cultural environment and as forces capable of reshaping that environment.

Through a comparative and critical approach, this research demonstrates that the women of these epics are not marginal figures but foundational to the moral and narrative structure of the texts. Their experiences

illuminate the tensions within patriarchal systems and invite ongoing reinterpretation. In doing so, they continue to speak to contemporary concerns about justice, gender equality, and the evolving understanding of womanhood in society.

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Arjuna in the Mahabharata : A study of Heroism and Dharma.

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Abstract:

Arjuna is one of the most important and famous characters in the Indian epic Mahabharata. He represents bravery, devotion, and dedication to duty. This research paper studies Arjun's life, qualities, challenges, and especially his role in the Kurukshetra war.

Key Words:*Arjuna, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita, Dharma, Kurukshetra War, Pandavas, Lord Krishna, Duty and Responsibility, Archery.*

Introduction:

The Mahabharata is one of the most famous epics in Indian literature. In this epic, there are many characters. Arjuna is the most important and complex character. He is not only known for his extraordinary archery skills but also for his great humanity. His life shows the struggle between personal feelings and social responsibility.

Objective of the Study:

- To follow Dharma
- He wanted to do what is right and just.
- To protect truth and justice
- He fought the Kurukshetra war to support goodness.
- To win the war for the Pandavas

As the greatest warrior, his goal was to destroy cruelty.

Research Methodology:

This study uses a qualitative research method. It follows a descriptive and analytical approach. Information has been collected from books, research articles, and internet sources.

1. Birth and Early Life: Arjuna was the third son of King Pandu and Queen Kunti. He is believed to be the spiritual son of Lord Indra, the king of gods. From childhood, Arjuna showed great talent in archery. He was trained by Guru Dronacharya.

A famous story from his training shows his concentration. When asked to aim at a bird placed on a tree, Arjuna said he could see only the bird's eye. This incident proves his focus and dedication, qualities that later made him the greatest archer of his time.

2. Marriage and Relationships: Arjuna married Draupadi after winning her swayamvara by successfully shooting the eye of a rotating fish while looking at its reflection in water. He also married Subhadra, the sister of Lord Krishna.

His friendship with Krishna is one of the most important relationships in the epic. Krishna acts as his guide and spiritual teacher. This friendship plays a necessary role in shaping Arjuna's character and decisions.

3. Exile and Spiritual Growth: The Pandavas were sent into exile for thirteen years. During this period, Arjuna performed intense penance and received divine weapons from various gods, including Lord Shiva. These weapons later helped him in the Kurukshetra war. Arjuna learned patience, self-control, and humanity during these difficult years.

4. Role in the Kurukshetra War: The Kurukshetra war is the central event of the Mahabharata. Arjuna was the main warrior of the Pandava army. However, before the war began, he felt deep sorrow and confusion when he saw his relatives, teachers, and friends on the opposite side.

He refused to fight and dropped his bow, Gandiva. At this critical moment, Krishna delivered the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita. Krishna explained the importance of duty and performing actions without attachment to results.

5. Symbolism and Importance: Arjuna symbolizes the ideal human being facing life's challenges. His confusion before the war represents the moral dilemmas that everyone faces. The guidance of Krishna represents wisdom and spiritual knowledge.

Through Arjuna, the Mahabharata teaches that one must perform their duty with honesty and without selfish desires. His life highlights the importance of courage, focus, and faith.

Conclusion:

Arjuna is more than just a warrior; he is a symbol of human struggle and spiritual growth. His journey from confusion to clarity shows the importance of guidance, self-control, and dedication to duty.

The teachings he received from Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita remain relevant even today. Arjuna's character continues to inspire people to act with courage and faith in difficult situations.

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Myths As A Treasure of Indian Knowledge System

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Abstract:

Myths are perpetual narratives that have permeated cultures across the world. In India, myths are not merely stories, but they are storehouse of ancient wisdom that shaped social values, ethical norms, philosophical thought, and cultural practices. These mythological narratives epitomize profound insights into human behaviour, cosmology, ethics, psychology, ecology, and governance. The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) consists of the epistemological foundations, philosophies, sciences, and artistic expressions developed on the subcontinent over millennia. The present research paper explores how Indian myths, especially those found in scriptures such as the Vedas*,* Upanishads*,* Puranas*,* Ramayana*, and* Mahabharata*, serve as a treasure of knowledge that still influences contemporary life. The paper examines myths' roles in moral education, scientific thinking, cultural identity, and sustainable living. It concludes that rather than rejecting myths as irrational or primitive, modern scholarship should take into consideration their multidimensional contributions to Indian knowledge System and society.*

Keywords:Indian Mythology, Indian Knowledge System (IKS), Cultural Heritage, Vedas, Epistemology, Ethics, Philosophy, NEP 2020

Introduction:

Though myths form the backbone of many ancient civilizations, in the Indian context they hold a particularly dignified role. Indian mythology is not an isolated segment of entertainment or folklore; instead, it lies at the intersection of religion, philosophy, art, and science. The phrase "Indian Knowledge System" refers to indigenous intellectual traditions developed over thousands of years in the Indian subcontinent, including mathematics, astronomy, medicine (Ayurveda), languages, philosophy, and ethical thought. Within these domains, myths convey layers of meaning that are both symbolic and instructive. Scholars such as Wendy Doniger, A.K. Ramanujan, and David Kinsley highlight that Indian myths function as complex symbolic systems that encode cultural and philosophical truths. Unlike Western definitions of myth, which often imply falsehood or fiction, in India myths are considered carriers of profound truth—transmitted through generations, shaping rituals, social norms, and philosophical inquiries. In the past, myths were devalued in academic discourse, viewed as primitive or irrational. However, contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes myths as dynamic cognitive and cultural resources. Myths disclose how ancient Indians explained natural phenomena, articulated moral dilemmas, and established ethical frameworks long before modern scientific paradigms emerged. This research article investigates how Indian myths contribute to the Indian Knowledge System and why they remain relevant today.

Aim and Objectives:

Aim:

To analyze the significance of myths as valuable components of the Indian Knowledge System and to identify the ways in which mythological narratives contribute to cultural, ethical, philosophical, and scientific understanding.

Objectives:

1. To scrutinize the cultural and philosophical significance of Indian myths.
2. To analyze how myths influence moral values, social conduct, and community identity.

3. To explore the educational and cognitive functions of myths in traditional Indian society.
4. To identify examples of mythological narratives that reflect ecological, psychological, and scientific insights.
5. To evaluate modern educational perspective that reinterprets Indian myths in contemporary contexts.

Hypothesis:

Indian myths are not merely symbolic stories. Instead, they encapsulate multifaceted knowledge that has contributed significantly to the Indian Knowledge System, influencing cultural values, philosophical thought, and practical knowledge across generations.

Research Methodology:

The present paper employs an analytical and interpretative methodology. The primary sources include mythological epics and scriptures such as the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, and *Puranas*. Secondary sources consist of peer-reviewed academic articles, books on Indian culture and mythology, and interpretative essays by eminent scholars.

Discussion and Interpretation:

1. Myths and Cultural Identity: In India, myths form the core of cultural identity for communities across regions and languages. Whether through the valor of Rama in the *Ramayana* or the moral dilemmas of Arjuna in the *Mahabharata*, myths teach collective values such as duty (*dharma*), righteousness (*satya*), loyalty (*bhakti*), and self-discipline (*tapas*). By teaching these values, myths have historically served as educational tools before formal systems of schooling existed. The allegorical nature of myths allowed people to internalize complex ideas through memorable narratives.

The *Mahabharata's* Bhagavad Gita, for instance, is not just a religious text; it is a philosophical discourse on duty, ethics, and human psychology. Arjuna's crisis of conscience on the battlefield symbolizes universal human dilemmas about life and moral responsibility. Lord Krishna's teachings provide timeless insights into action without attachment, a principle that resonates even with modern psychological thought on stress, motivation, and ethical decision-making.

2. Myths and Ethical Frameworks: Indian myths provide ethical blueprints that guide conduct. For example, the story of Raja Harishchandra—a king known for truthfulness even under extreme suffering—reinforces integrity and moral courage. Similarly, the principle of *ahimsa* (non-violence) exemplified in the *Mahabharata* and later championed by leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, reflects mythological influences that continue to shape social reforms.These narratives do more than entertain; they teach individuals how to navigate moral complexity, confront personal flaws, and uphold social harmony. Unlike rigid legal codes, myths offer flexible and context-sensitive ways of understanding right and wrong, making them adaptable and enduring.

3. Myths and Philosophical Thought: Indian myths are interwoven with philosophical concepts from systems like Vedanta, Samkhya, and Yoga. For example, the *Upanishads*—philosophical texts embedded within Vedic literature—use metaphors and mythic imagery to explain the nature of reality and consciousness (*Brahman* and *Atman*). The imagery of the cosmic egg (*Hiranyagarbha*) or the world being the stage of divine play (*Lila*) are mythic representations that communicate complex metaphysical ideas.These narratives encourage introspection and a sense of interconnectedness that are central themes in Indian philosophical traditions. By presenting philosophical concepts in engaging narrative forms, myths helped ancient thinkers communicate ideas that could otherwise seem abstract or inaccessible.

4. Scientific Knowledge in Mythological Narratives: Though myths are symbolic, some narratives reveal early scientific thinking. For instance, Indian myths describe cosmological cycles, including creation and dissolution of the universe, a concept similar to modern scientific theories of cyclic cosmology. Stories in the *Vedas* refer to astronomical phenomena, seasonal cycles, and natural rhythms—indicating observational knowledge of the natural world.

The *Rigveda* contains hymns that reference astronomical patterns and celestial bodies in ways that parallel early astronomy. While not scientific theories in the strict modern sense, these narratives reflect

empirical observations integrated within a holistic worldview where natural phenomena are interconnected with human experience.

5. Ecological Wisdom in Myths: Indian myths often depict deep respect for nature and life. Many deities are associated with rivers (*Ganga*), mountains (*Himalaya*), and forests. These narratives reinforce ecological awareness and sustainable practices. For example, the reverence for the *Tulsi* plant (holy basil) not only has religious significance but also recognizes its medicinal properties. Similarly, the narrative of *Prithvi* (Earth) as a goddess promotes respect for land and natural resources. Ancient epics implicitly advise moderation and harmony with the environment. These teachings align with modern principles of sustainability and ecological balance, illustrating how myths encapsulate knowledge that anticipates present-day environmental ethics.

6. Role of Myths in Education and Moral Development: In traditional Indian education systems (such as *gurukulas*), myths were integral to learning. Students memorized and recited epic verses, not only to learn language and memory skills but also to absorb ethical and cultural understandings. Storytelling fostered moral imagination and emotional intelligence by enabling students to empathize with characters facing moral challenges.

This mode of learning contrasts with purely analytical education because it fosters holistic development—engaging emotions, ethics, and cognition simultaneously. Modern educators increasingly recognize the value of narrative learning in character education, suggesting that myths have enduring pedagogical relevance.

7. Contemporary Relevance of Myths: In modern times, myths are being reinterpreted through literature, theatre, films, and academic scholarship. Writers like R.K. Narayan and Amish Tripathi retell mythological stories for contemporary audiences, highlighting their relevance in modern contexts. Scholars also re-examine myths through feminist, ecological, and postcolonial lenses, uncovering new meanings and challenging traditional interpretations. These reinterpretations demonstrate that myths are not static relics but evolving narratives that continue to resonate with changing cultural contexts. This adaptability is part of what makes myths a living treasure within the Indian Knowledge System.

Conclusion:

Indian myths are far more than ancient tales; they are multidimensional knowledge systems that shaped the intellectual, cultural, ethical, and ecological foundations of Indian civilization. Through narratives that convey philosophical insights, moral frameworks, cultural identity, and empirical observations of the natural world, myths serve as a living repository of wisdom. While modern science and secular education have transformed how knowledge is organized and taught, the value of myths in understanding human experience remains undiminished. This present research article underlines the central role of myths in the Indian Knowledge System—not as primitive fantasies but as sophisticated narrative forms that communicate complex ideas in accessible ways. By appreciating myths' symbolic depth and cultural significance, scholars, educators, and students can gain insights into ethical living, cognitive development, and holistic worldviews that are essential for contemporary life.

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Reinterpreting Marginalized Women in Indian Mythology: Gender, Identity and Contemporary relevance in Kavita Kane's selected novels.

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Abstract:

This paper explores the Kavita Kane's novels on women in myths and truths in Contemporary societal contexts. Kavita Kane's novels have major themes of gender discrimination, patriarchal society and the quest for female identity. She has written in her novels Indian Mythology and history, with the help of societal norms. We also study in her novels about contemporary relevance of myths, women life and her position in society. In her novel Kanne depicted marginalized women characters in addressing contemporary challenges. She retell and reinterpret of mythological female characters in perspective of Indian mythology and history through her novels. Kane's work highlight the rethinking of women's position in culture and society, offering a critique of enduring patriarchal structures while empowering silenced voices from mythology. This paper analyze how the narratives challenge traditional myths, expose systematic oppression of marginalize women and establish striking parallel with contemporary issues of gender inequality, female autonomy and societal expectations in modern India.

***Keywords**: Myth, Mythology, Marginalize Women, Reinterpreting, Retelling,Patriarchy,Gender Discrimination, Female Identity etc.*

Introduction:-

In India Hindu Mythology and historical event are ore important in Indian literature. In Indian culture mythological stories merely rooted in Indian literature therefore its influence on the lives of Indian people. Indian literature is inspiration from the Vedas, Puranas and Upanishads etc. In contemporary Indian literature there is a new trend of retelling, reimagining, reinterpreting, reintroducing to women in myths from a modern point of view. It is focus on marginalized characters in the mythological stories. In 21st century, we have to know how myths reproduced and how myths have come back to life in modern era. So many writers re influenced from the mythological stories, they are written mythological stories in the sense of modern era. Such writers Amitav Gosh, Amish Tripathy, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Devdutt Pattanaik, Anand Neelakandan, Ashwin Sanghi, Kavita Kane, Akshad Gupta and several more. Use mythology interplay in shaping modern Indian literature. Kavita Kane also retelling and reinterpreting marginalized female characters as an individual point of view. Kavita kane's literary work reflects comparison of modern women and ancient time women characters, how deal with narrow minded and patriarchal society.

Brife introduction of the Author Kavita Kane:

Kavita Kane is popular contemporary feminist author for mythological fiction. The center of the themes of her literary works are mythological stories in the context of feminism. Kavita kane was born on August 5, 1966 in the Mumbai, India. She had diverse upbringing in cities like Mumbai, Patna, Delhi and Pune. She is an alumna of fergusson College, Pune, where she persuade her postgraduates studies in English literature and Mass communication at the University of Pune. Her initial aspirations leaned towards career in administrative services, but her passion for writing ultimately led for journalism provided her with the perfect platform to express her love for the written word. She is an Indian author and former journalist renowned for her mythological fiction keeping unheard feminine voices in center and focus on Indian mythology.

All of her novels themes revolve around the marginalized women's voices in in Indian mythological stories like Ramayana and Mahabharata. Kane's novels depicts the characters of feminine sensibility recreate in mythological stories. She delves marginalized women who was oppressed, injustice, humiliated, exploited from the patriarchal society. She is retelling and reinterpret of marginalized women characters in perspective of Indian history and mythology through her literary works. Such as "Sita's Sister" (2014), "Menaka's Choice" (2015), "Lanka's Princess" (2016), "The Fisher Queen's Dynasty" (2017), "Ahalya's Awakening" (2019), "Saraswati's Gift" (2021), "Tara's Truce" (2023) and "Bhima's Wife" (2025). Its delves into the lives of strong and complex women who was victim by patriarchal tradition and culture.

Myths and Mythology:

The term myth come from the Greek word 'mythos' which has various meaning. Translation include "ward", "story" and "fiction". The origin of myths themselves tend to be vegue, myths strive to answer philosophical questions dealing with existence, nature and ideology. In literature the word myth is used to describe a traditional story that typically aims to explain a natural or social phenomenon, its influence on their culture and traditions of the society.

Mythology is a collection of myths or stories about a specific person, culture, religion or any group of people with share beliefs. It is filled with tales about relationships between gods and humans. Mythology is branch of anthropology that deals with human culture and society. Mythological themes in Indian literature its bear influential destiny, defying traces in the two epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Marginalize Women:

Marginal word relegated to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or a group. According to Susan M. Squier, 'It is domination and oppression of women and other marginalized groups'. Marginalized people are labeled as outsiders for reasons such as their color, poverty, education level, gender, identification, age or disabilities. Marginalized people live without full access to their civil rights. In ancient time women was marginalize in patriarchal society on the basis on gender discrimination. In English literature, marginalized women are defined as female characters relegated to the periphery of social, political and economic life, often experiencing systemic oppression, exclusion and reduced agency due to patriarchy, class, race or culture etc.

Reinterpret and Retell Marginalized Women in Kavita Kane's Novels:

Kavita Kane reinterpreting and retelling of Indian mythology in her literary works. She is focusing on the marginalized women of Hindu Mythology or epic. She has raised voices of ignored, verified or silenced in Hindu mythological puranic stories of the Mahabharata and Ramayana. Through novels such as, 'Sita's Sister', 'Menaka's Choice', 'Lanka's princess', 'Ahalya's Awakening', 'The Fisher Queen Dynasty', 'Saraswati's Gift', 'Tara's Truce' and 'Bhima's Wife'. In this research paper, to analyze and delves the marginalized women characters as Lanka's Princess and Bhima's Wife they are exploited by the gender discrimination.

Lanka's Princess: A Journey of Meenakshi from Suppression to Supermacy:

Kavita kane reinterpreting and retelling marginalized women from the Ramayana which is known as Lanka's Princess. Kane reinterpret the character Surpanakha, whose nose was cut off by Lakshmana. Surpanakha is 'marginalized' within her own family on the basis of gender discrimination. She is neglected by her own mother because she is daughter unworthy and useless for inheriting the legacy. She is not be able to help her brothers in the scheme of reconquering Lanka.

Surpanakha is grown up as a neglected child and fails to receive love and respect from her own mother and brother. She is rejected as a women by her mother, it shows the consequences of male dominated society and gender inequality. Surpanakha was dislike, neglected, oppressed, injustice and humiliated from her mother Kaikesi. In our culture, is looking beautiful, being a beautiful it's her identity. But Surpanakha is not consider to be beautiful women, which is judge by her color, height and body structure. Her mother and brothers were abusing and humiliating her because she looked ugly. Surpanakha's skin color was dark and had a sharp nails as a dark monster.

"she hardly looks beautiful or like me. She's quite ugly!' said Kaikesi, staring at the sleeping child, a frown deepening on her lovely face, she's scrawny and much darker than me!" (2, Lanka's Princess)

Surpanakha's mother literally calls her ugly. She is always humiliated and mis-treated by her own family members. That's why she felt of inferiority complex, cause of her skin color and physical features.

Surpanakha was victim of the male dominated society. She transfer herself from victim to villain, that is called the journey of conversion of Meenakshi into Surpanakha. Kane depict the Meenakshi as a girl child, has experienced the distressing effects of abandonment. Meenakshi has not important in her family, she exhibited emotional detachment treated as a outsider in her family. She didn't grown up like her brother Ravana and Vibhishan. Her mother's favorite child is Ravana and Vibhishan , Kaikesi wants to be Ravana as A King of Lanka and Vibhishan to study all scriptures and to become a scholar her dream and desires from her sons. Being a girl child Meenakshi does not studied and getting proper guidance from her family. They do not care about her career and dream. She stay in a corner of her house till her marriage, she is thirsty for her mother's love and respect to her. Its shows the Indian culture there is female identity not important than

male. In society, women doesn't have rights to choose their career, spouse and education. It is chosen by her family.

Surpanakha lives isolated from her own family. She search her own identity, in a society characterized by patriarchal norms. She married Vidyujiva, which made her satisfied and gave birth to son. In our patriarchal society, woman give birth to son it's prestigious and proud thing for that woman. People raise her respect in the society and family. Surpanakha's husband killed by her own brother Ravan for safety of Lanka. Then she exile herself and her son in Dandaka forest, far away from Lanka, where she is shown to be ill-treated by Ram and Lakshaman.

Surpanakha had lustful desires for men; but her desired not fulfilled. She wants to treated someone herself with love, respect and care for her, so that's why she has vengeful nature. She wants to take revenge her brothers and the two men Ram and Lakshaman. Wherever she went she was victim of patriarchal society. Kane highlight Meenakshi transfer in Surpanakha, as a strong woman and courageous. Her family did not consider her presence but she made herself important person and her own identity. She proved herself as a powerful, strong and courageous woman in patriarchal society. Surpanakha was humiliated, oppressed, injustice and abused cause of the gender discrimination, but she create her own identity in male dominated society. Kane explores Lanka's Princess journey (Meenakshi into Surpanakha) as a woman struggling for identity and agency in a patriarchal world.

Bhima's Wife:

Kavita kane focus on the marginalized women character in mythological stories.in the novel Bhima's wife kane reinterpret marginalized character of 'Hidimbi' in the epic Mahabharata. We know about the Pandavas wife Draupadi, but Hidimbi is the first Pandavas daughter-in-low, Bhima's first wife. Kane brings her out of the shadow. Kane gives voice to the marginalize characters, who was search their identity and respect in the society. Hidimbi was not a princess, she was a rakshashi or demoness. She saved Bhima's life when he was hide in the forest.

Then Bhima and Hidimbi falls in love with each other. Hidimbi wants to marry with Bhima, she chosen her spouce but its against her community. Her brother never accept her decision, because women didn't chosen their spouce it's against the societal norms. She married with different community man, Bhima belongs to royal family and Hidimbi is forest princess of Kamakyavan however they got married. In Bhima's family did not accept to Hidimbi, here kane explains the modern society there are also not accept the inter-cast marriages or different communities marriage with each other.

The Pandavas and their mother Kunti, make it clear to the couple the Pandavas are destined to leave soon to get their kingdom we wouldn't take you to our kingdom. There fore both are married it's courage of the Hidimbi as a women. She knows she will live alone in whole life without her husband after some time. Hidimbi was pregnant from Bhima and soon give birth to son, Ghatotkach. Pandavas return their kingdom and she live without her husband. She left alone in the forest with her son. She lives lonely and independent woman. Hidimbi raised her child as a single mother, that told Draupadi to her. In the great war Mahabharata, she sends her son Ghatotkach to fight by his father's side in the battle, it's an honor to be Bhima's son. But the ambush of time, the great war sucks him and her mother sacrifice her son. Kane here express the contemporary women as a single mother live her child and raise her child as single parent. Kane compare to Hidimbi as like a today's modern women. Bhima's family did not accept Hidimbi, they used her for their own sake, injustice with her. They humiliated and seduced because she didn't belongs to royal family it's like modern social orientation. Hidimbi was the victim of the hierarchy of community and race, sake of Dharma oppressed and injustice with her.

Conclusion:

According to Kavita Kane retelling are a way of revisiting, rediscovering and reimagining the universal truths of our Indian mythology. The narratives of Surpanakha and Hidimbi resonate with contemporary situation surrounding gender identity and expression in the society. Kane brings to life a neglected character like Surpanakha and Hidimbi, both are neglected by their family members. Kane highlights to the marginalized women character as a heroes and celebrating their strength and resilience. Kane inspired to readers understanding of feminity and the role of women in society. Kane dedicated her novel "Bhima's Wife" to modern woman, who is a single mother in the contemporary society. She depict how the marginalized woman search their identity in the patriarchal society.

In the patriarchal society, women is only objectify she have no rights to take decision of her own life because of the our culture and traditions. Women's life the struggle and fight for their rights and choice. Even today also woman fights against our societal norms, which is create by male dominated society. Kane

express Surpanakha's emotions, transformation, vengeful nature, sadness, strength and inferiority complex etc. It's contrast Kane express Hidimbi's character a single mother, has a choice, courageous and fight against societal norms. Though Kane's feminist view, to break the gender biasness in Indian mythological stories and its relate to the contemporary women's societal issues.

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The Paradox of Dharma: Contextual Ethics and Moral Navigation in the Mahabharata's Ethical Dilemmas

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Abstract

This paper examines the concept of Dharma in the Mahabharata and argues that the epic does not present it as a fixed or universal moral law. Instead, through close textual analysis of selected incidents before, during, and after the Kurukshetra war, the study demonstrates that Dharma operates as a contextual, role-based, and often tragic ethical principle. The narrative repeatedly stages conflicts not between dharma and adharma, but between competing forms of duty. Characters such as Bhishma, Arjuna, and Yudhishthira are compelled to choose between equally valid obligations, and their decisions frequently produce moral residue in the form of guilt, sorrow, and reflection. By highlighting role-based responsibility (Svadharma), contextual justification, and tragic consequence, the epic portrays ethical life as a difficult navigation rather than a clear moral formula. The Mahabharata thus remains philosophically significant as a sustained reflection on moral complexity and human responsibility.

Keywords: *Dharma, Mahabharata, Contextual Ethics, Svadharma, Moral Conflict, Role-Based Responsibility, Tragic Ethics*

A) Introduction

The Mahabharata is widely known as an epic narrative of the Great War between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Yet, beyond its political conflict and heroic episodes, the text presents a sustained reflection on moral life. At the center of this reflection stands the concept of dharma. Although the term is commonly translated as duty, righteousness, or moral order, its meaning within the epic is far more complex. The Mahabharata repeatedly presents situations in which dharma is not clear, stable, or easy to follow.

This research paper examines whether the Mahabharata presents dharma as a fixed and universal moral law, or as a contextual principle shaped by role, circumstance, and consequence. Through close analysis of selected incidents from different sections (Parvas), this study argues that the epic portrays dharma as situational and often tragic. Rather than offering clear moral answers, the Mahabharata invites reflection on the complexity of ethical decision-making in human life.

B) Theoretical Framework

The central concept of this paper is dharma. In classical Indian thought, dharma does not have a single meaning. It can refer to moral duty, social responsibility, law, righteousness, or even the sustaining order of the universe. Different traditions interpret it differently as Varnadharma relates to duties based on social order, Rajadharma to the responsibilities of a king, Svadharma to one's personal duty, and Apaddharma to conduct during times of crisis. These variations already suggest that dharma is not a rigid or uniform principle.

This study reads the Mahabharata through the idea of contextual ethics. Contextual ethics does not treat morality as a fixed set of universal rules. Instead, it recognizes that moral decisions are shaped by situation, role, and competing responsibilities. In many philosophical traditions, including virtue ethics and moral particularism, ethical judgment requires practical wisdom rather than mechanical rule-following. A similar pattern appears in the Mahabharata, where characters must weigh different duties against each other in complex situations.

The method adopted in this paper is close textual analysis. Selected episodes from different sections (Parvas) are examined carefully to understand how dharma operates within the narrative. The aim is not to

impose modern moral theories upon the text, but to observe how the epic itself presents ethical tension and negotiation. By studying these cases together, this research seeks to identify a consistent pattern in the epic's treatment of moral conflict.

C) Dharma Before the War: Social and Institutional Conflict

Before the Kurukshetra war begins, the Mahabharata already presents several incidents that reveal the internal tension within dharma. These early episodes show that moral conflict does not arise only in battlefield situations. Instead, it is deeply rooted in social structure, political institutions, and personal vows. By examining these incidents, we see that dharma often clashes with itself even in times of apparent stability.

One of the earliest examples is Bhishma's terrible vow. In order to fulfill his father's desire to marry Satyavati, Bhishma renounces his claim to the throne and vows lifelong celibacy. From one perspective, this act appears as the highest form of filial duty. He sacrifices personal power and happiness for his father's satisfaction. However, this very vow creates long-term instability in the Kuru dynasty. The absence of a clear successor eventually leads to political confusion and conflict. In this case, an act of Svadharma (personal dharma) produces wider social consequences.

Another significant incident is the story of Ekalavya and Drona. Ekalavya, though not formally accepted as a student, practices archery with dedication and becomes highly skilled. When Drona asks for his thumb as guru-dakshina, Ekalavya obeys without protest. On the surface, this may appear as loyalty to the guru. Yet the demand is clearly influenced by Drona's desire to protect Arjuna's superiority. Here, the ideals of merit and fairness come into tension with social hierarchy and institutional loyalty. The incident shows how dharma can be shaped by power relations.

The dice game and Draupadi's humiliation in the royal court further deepen this moral crisis. Yudhishthira, bound by his understanding of royal conduct, agrees to play dice and eventually stakes everything, including Draupadi. When Draupadi questions whether a man who has lost himself has the right to stake his wife, the court remains largely silent. Elders such as Bhishma struggle to answer her question clearly. This silence exposes the weakness of institutional dharma. Legal reasoning fails to address moral injustice. The episode demonstrates that adherence to formal rules does not always guarantee ethical action.

Taken together, these pre-war incidents show that dharma in the Mahabharata is already unstable and contested. Duties conflict with one another, and actions taken in the name of righteousness produce unintended consequences.

D) Dharma in the War: Context, Strategy, and Moral Compromise

The battlefield becomes a space where moral principles are constantly tested. Here, dharma is not discussed in abstract terms; it must be acted upon under pressure, fear, anger, and urgency. As the war progresses, the line between righteous conduct and strategic necessity becomes increasingly blurred.

The most famous moral crisis occurs at the beginning of the war, when Arjuna refuses to fight. Seeing his teachers, relatives, and friends on both sides of the battlefield, he is filled with grief and doubt. His hesitation is not cowardice but moral confusion. He questions whether killing his own kin can ever be justified, even in the name of justice. In response, Krishna speaks of Svadharma, reminding Arjuna of his duty as a warrior. The argument does not deny the pain of war, but it insists that abandoning one's role may also be a form of moral failure. This episode shows that dharma is deeply connected with role and responsibility, even when the action demanded is tragic.

As the war continues, several incidents reveal how dharma is reinterpreted under extreme circumstances. The killing of Bhishma through the strategy of placing Shikhandi before Arjuna raises questions about fairness in combat. Bhishma refuses to fight Shikhandi due to a personal vow, and this weakness is deliberately used against him. Similarly, the death of Abhimanyu inside the Chakravyuha formation exposes the breakdown of war ethics. Multiple warriors attack a single young fighter, violating established battle norms. In both cases, victory is achieved, but at the cost of moral clarity.

The episode of Yudhishthira's half-truth about Ashwatthama's death further complicates the idea of righteousness. Known for his commitment to truth, Yudhishthira speaks in a way that misleads Drona, leading to his death. Though technically not a complete lie, the statement is intentionally deceptive.

Likewise, the killing of Karna when he is unarmed and struggling with his chariot wheel challenges the rules of honorable warfare. Krishna justifies the act by referring to Karna's earlier participation in injustice. Here, past wrongs are used to defend present violations.

These episodes show that during the war, dharma becomes deeply situational. Actions are justified not only by rules, but by context, history, and consequence. The epic does not present these events as morally simple. Instead, it highlights the heavy cost of each decision. The war demonstrates that in moments of crisis, dharma often requires compromise, and even righteous victory carries moral burden.

E) Dharma after the War: Consequence, Guilt, and Moral Reflection

The end of the Kurukshetra war does not bring moral resolution. Instead, it opens a new phase of ethical reflection. Although the Pandavas achieve victory, the epic makes it clear that triumph does not erase the cost of violence. The battlefield is left covered with the bodies of relatives, teachers, sons, and friends. In this atmosphere, the meaning of dharma is questioned in the silence of destruction.

One of the most disturbing incidents after the war is the night massacre carried out by Ashwatthama. Driven by anger and revenge for his father's death, he attacks the sleeping camp of the Pandavas and kills the sons of Draupadi. This act takes place outside the formal structure of battle. It violates not only war codes but basic human morality. Even after the main conflict has ended, violence continues. The episode suggests that adharma does not disappear simply because one side has won. Moral disorder persists beyond political victory.

Taken together, these post-war episodes show that dharma in the Mahabharata does not end with action. It continues as self-examination and reflection. Victory does not remove doubt, and justice does not remove suffering. The epic thus presents dharma as a lifelong ethical struggle rather than a clear moral formula.

F) Structural Analysis: Dharma as Contextual and Tragic Ethics

The moral tension in the Mahabharata is not accidental or limited to a few dramatic scenes. It is structural. The epic repeatedly places its characters in situations where they must choose between competing forms of dharma. This section argues that the Mahabharata systematically presents dharma as contextual, role-bound, and often tragic in its operation.

Conflict Between Dharma and Dharma

One of the most striking features of the epic is that moral conflict rarely appears as a simple struggle between dharma and adharma. More often, it appears as a conflict between two valid but incompatible duties suggested by Dharma.

Bhishma's vow illustrates this clearly. His duty as a son leads him to renounce the throne, but his broader responsibility to the kingdom is indirectly weakened by that very decision. Similarly, in the dice game, Yudhishthira believes he is following royal conduct by accepting the challenge, yet this commitment to formal duty results in deep injustice toward Draupadi. In these cases, the problem is not the absence of morality, but the collision of two or more moral obligations suggested by Dharma.

Arjuna's hesitation on the battlefield presents the same tension in another form. His compassion for his relatives is morally sincere. At the same time, his responsibility as a warrior and defender of justice demands action. The epic does not dismiss either concern. Instead, it forces Arjuna to act within a tragic choice. This recurring pattern shows that dharma in the Mahabharata is not a single rule that solves conflict but it is a field of competing responsibilities.

Role-Based Ethics and Self Duty (Svadharma)

Another consistent feature of the epic is the importance of role. A king, a warrior, a teacher, and a wife are not expected to act in identical ways. Their responsibilities are shaped by position and circumstance. This emphasis on Svadharma suggests that morality is relational rather than universal in application.

Krishna's teaching to Arjuna is grounded in this idea. Arjuna is reminded that abandoning his warrior role out of emotional distress may create further disorder. Similarly, Yudhishthira's duty as king compels him to take decisions that are personally painful. Even Bhishma, though deeply aware of injustice, remains loyal to the throne because he interprets his identity through his vow and position.

However, role-based ethics does not guarantee moral clarity. When Yudhishthira speaks the half-truth about Ashwatthama, he does so as a king trying to end a destructive war. Yet the act damages his personal commitment to truth. The epic shows that acting according to one's role may require compromise in another moral dimension. This complexity reinforces the idea that dharma is situational and layered.

Context and Moral Justification

Many battlefield incidents demonstrate how context influences moral judgment. The killing of Karna when he is unarmed challenges the rules of honorable combat. Krishna justifies the act by referring to Karna's earlier involvement in Draupadi's humiliation and other injustices. In this reasoning, past actions become part of the moral context of the present decision.

Similarly, Bhima's strike against Duryodhana below the waist violates the established rules of mace combat. Yet it is defended as a response to Duryodhana's previous misconduct. These justifications do not erase the discomfort surrounding the acts. Instead, they show how the epic allows moral reasoning to consider history, intention, and consequence rather than rigid procedure. This suggests that the text is aware of the instability of moral codes in extreme situations.

Tragic Consequence and Moral Residue

Perhaps the strongest evidence that dharma in the Mahabharata is contextual and tragic lies in the aftermath of moral decisions. Even when actions are justified as necessary, they leave behind what may be called moral guilt, sorrow, curse, and self-doubt.

Yudhishthira's deep regret after the war shows that righteousness does not eliminate suffering. The victory of the Pandavas does not produce moral satisfaction. Instead, it leads to reflection and unease. There is no final moment in the epic where dharma becomes simple or fully resolved.

The Mahabharata does not present dharma as a system that guarantees clear outcomes. Rather, it portrays ethical life as a difficult navigation between imperfect choices. Each decision may protect one value while harming another. The Mahabharata does not teach moral absolutism. Instead, it presents dharma as dynamic and context-sensitive. The epic recognizes that human life operates within complexity, where ethical certainty is rare and responsibility is heavy.

In this sense, the greatness of the Mahabharata lies not in offering simple moral answers, but in honestly portraying the difficulty of moral action. Dharma in the epic is not a rigid law to be applied mechanically. It is a lived responsibility that must be interpreted within changing circumstances, often at great personal cost.

G) Comparative Reflection and Wider Significance

The ethical concerns present in the Mahabharata resonate with important debates in moral philosophy. The moral judgment depends on context is similar to what is described in virtue ethics. In virtue ethics, especially in Aristotle's thought, moral action requires practical wisdom. A person must judge what is appropriate in a particular situation rather than simply follow a fixed rule. In the Mahabharata, characters are repeatedly placed in situations where no rule alone can solve the problem. They must decide which duty takes priority. This resembles the idea that ethical life requires discernment and balance.

The epic's treatment of war raises questions similar to those found in just war theory. Questions about fairness in combat, protection of the weak, and limits of violence are central to both traditions. Yet the Mahabharata goes further by showing how these rules break down under emotional and political pressure. By recording both adherence to and violation of war ethics, the epic presents a realistic picture of moral struggle.

The concept of role-based duty in the epic challenges modern ideas of universal morality. In contemporary thought, moral principles are often seen as applying equally to all individuals. In contrast, the Mahabharata emphasizes that different roles carry different responsibilities. A king's decision cannot be judged in exactly the same way as that of a common citizen. This does not mean that anything is justified, but it suggests that moral evaluation must consider position and context.

Through these comparisons, it becomes clear that the Mahabharata is not merely a religious or mythological text. It is a serious reflection on ethical life. Its exploration of dharma anticipates many later

philosophical concerns about responsibility, consequence, and moral conflict. By presenting dharma as contextual and often tragic, the epic invites readers to reflect deeply on the complexity of human decision-making.

H) Conclusion

Through the examination of selected incidents before, during, and after the Kurukshetra war, a consistent pattern has emerged. The epic does not offer a simple moral formula. Instead, it presents dharma as complex, layered, and often painful in its application.

The Mahabharata constructs dharma as contextual and role dependent rather than absolute and uniform. Moral action in the epic demands judgment, discernment, and acceptance of consequence. There is no perfect solution that removes suffering completely. In this sense, the epic presents ethical life as a tragic responsibility.

The Mahabharata does not merely teach obedience to rules but it portrays the difficulty of living ethically in a world of competing duties and imperfect choices. By doing so, the epic remains relevant, not because it provides ready-made answers, but because it encourages serious reflection on the nature of moral decision-making.

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Rewriting American Myths in a Technological Age: A Study of Myth and Reality in Kim Stanley Robinson's The Gold Coast

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Abstract:

Kim Stanley Robinson's The Gold Coast (1988), the second novel in the "Three Californias Trilogy," presents a futuristic vision of Southern California dominated by corporate power, technological excess, and environmental decay. The novel challenges traditional American myths such as the myth of progress, individual freedom, and suburban prosperity. Instead of portraying California as a land of opportunity and renewal, Robinson depicts it as a fragmented and controlled space where human values are subordinated to corporate interests and technological systems. This paper examines how Robinson deconstructs these dominant myths through the experiences of his protagonist, Jim McClendon. The novel reveals how technological development, rather than ensuring human happiness, leads to alienation, social inequality, and ecological destruction. By blending science fiction with social realism, Robinson exposes the contradictions inherent in modern American society. The study also explores how The Gold Coast reflects postmodern concerns about identity, power, and environmental sustainability. Robinson questions the ideological foundations that support technological capitalism. Through satire, symbolism, and dystopian imagery, the novel dismantles the romanticized vision of California as a utopian landscape. This research argues that The Gold Coast serves as a powerful critique of contemporary myths that continue to shape political, economic, and cultural life. By revealing the gap between myth and reality, Robinson invites readers to reconsider their assumptions about progress, freedom, and human well-being.

Keywords:*American Myth, Technological Dystopia, Suburban Culture, Postmodern Fiction, Environmental Crisis*

Introduction:

Kim Stanley Robinson is widely regarded as one of the most influential contemporary science fiction writers, particularly known for his engagement with environmental, political, and social issues. His works consistently explore the relationship between human society and natural systems, as well as the ethical implications of technological development. Through his fiction, Robinson examines how political ideologies, economic structures, and ecological concerns shape human life.

His "Three Californias Trilogy," consisting of The Wild Shore (1984), The Gold Coast (1988), and Pacific Edge (1990), presents three alternative futures for Orange County, California. Each novel represents a distinct ideological vision. The Wild Shore portrays a post-apocalyptic society struggling for survival, Pacific Edge imagines an ecological utopia, and The Gold Coast presents a corporate-controlled dystopia. Among these, The Gold Coast occupies a central position, functioning as a warning against unchecked capitalism and technological dominance.

American culture has long been shaped by powerful myths, including the belief in unlimited progress, individual self-reliance, economic prosperity, and suburban comfort. These myths are particularly associated with California, which has often been imagined as a paradise of innovation, freedom, and opportunity. Robinson challenges these ideals by presenting a future in which technological advancement has intensified social control, environmental destruction, and economic inequality.

This paper analyzes how Robinson deconstructs these myths in The Gold Coast and exposes the ideological illusions behind technological optimism and consumer culture. By focusing on individual experience and social structures, Robinson connects personal suffering with systemic injustice.

The Myth of Progress and Technological Advancement

One of the most influential American myths is the belief in continuous progress through science and technology. From the Industrial Revolution to the digital age, technological development has been celebrated as a guarantee of human improvement. In modern society, technology is often equated with efficiency, convenience, and social advancement. In The Gold Coast, Robinson critically examines this assumption. The novel's setting is filled with advanced transportation systems, automated factories, surveillance networks, and computerized administration. Despite these developments, human life does not improve. Instead, society becomes rigid, impersonal, and hierarchical.

Jim McClendon works as a "disassembler," dismantling machines in a massive recycling industry. His job symbolizes the circular and meaningless nature of technological production, where machines are constantly built and destroyed without contributing to genuine human welfare. This endless cycle reflects the wastefulness of capitalist production and the absence of meaningful purpose.

Technology also functions as a tool of social control. Corporate authorities monitor workers, regulate communication, and restrict movement. Public spaces are privatized, and citizens are reduced to data points in digital systems. Robinson suggests that technological progress, when driven by profit and power, undermines human dignity and democratic values.

Through this portrayal, Robinson challenges technological determinism, the belief that technology inevitably leads to social improvement. Instead, he emphasizes that technology is shaped by political and economic interests and can serve oppressive purposes.

The Myth of Individual Freedom

Another central American myth is the belief in individual liberty and self-determination. The frontier tradition and capitalist ideology promote the idea that individuals can shape their own destinies through hard work and courage. Success is often presented as a personal achievement rather than a social product. In The Gold Coast, this myth is systematically dismantled. Jim McClendon appears rebellious and independent. He engages in acts of vandalism and expresses hostility toward corporate authority. These actions give him a temporary sense of empowerment and resistance. However, his rebellion is largely symbolic and ineffective. He remains economically dependent on the very system he opposes. His job, housing, and social life are controlled by corporate institutions. Robinson shows that individual resistance, without collective organization, cannot bring meaningful change.

Freedom in the novel is presented as an illusion. Employment, transportation, healthcare, and entertainment are regulated by corporations. Choices are limited to pre-approved options. People are encouraged to believe they are free while remaining structurally constrained. Jim's emotional isolation further illustrates the limits of individualism. He struggles to form lasting relationships and often feels disconnected from others. Robinson suggests that excessive individualism weakens community bonds and reinforces systemic oppression.

The Myth of Suburban Prosperity

Suburbia has long symbolized the American Dream of stability, comfort, and middle-class success. Postwar suburbanization promised security, privacy, and material abundance. California's suburbs, in particular, have been celebrated as models of modern living. The Gold Coast presents a distorted version of this dream. The novel's suburbs are overcrowded, polluted, and dominated by highways and industrial zones. Natural landscapes have been replaced by concrete structures and technological infrastructure. Residential areas are integrated into corporate networks, eliminating privacy and autonomy.

Despite material abundance, characters experience dissatisfaction and anxiety. Consumer goods fail to provide emotional fulfillment. Advertising and media create artificial desires, encouraging endless consumption. Happiness becomes dependent on purchasing power. Environmental degradation is a crucial aspect of this critique. Pollution, noise, and waste characterize the suburban environment. The destruction of nature exposes the ecological cost of consumer culture. Robinson connects suburban prosperity with unsustainable exploitation of resources. Through this depiction, Robinson challenges the assumption that economic growth automatically leads to social well-being and personal happiness.

Postmodern Identity and Fragmentation

The Gold Coast reflects postmodern concerns about identity, meaning, and social cohesion. In late-capitalist societies, traditional narratives of progress, nationhood, and morality have lost credibility. Individuals struggle to find stable identities within rapidly changing systems. Jim's identity is unstable and contradictory. He oscillates between conformity and rebellion, cynicism and idealism. He desires social change but lacks the means to achieve it. His uncertainty mirrors the broader cultural crisis of postmodern society. Robinson employs episodic narration, irony, and self-reflexive commentary to emphasize fragmentation. The narrative does not follow a simple linear progression. Instead, it reflects the disordered experience of modern life. This fragmentation extends to social relationships. Communities are weak, and interpersonal trust is limited. People interact primarily through institutional frameworks rather than personal bonds. Robinson suggests that meaningful identity requires collective engagement and shared values.

The novel thus invites readers to rethink individual success in terms of social responsibility.

Environmental Myth and Ecological Crisis

Another important myth challenged in The Gold Coast is the belief that nature can be endlessly exploited without consequences. Industrial capitalism treats the environment as an infinite resource available for human use. Robinson depicts a severely damaged ecosystem. Wildlife has disappeared, air quality is poor, and natural spaces are scarce. Environmental destruction is normalized and rarely questioned. Pollution is treated as an unavoidable byproduct of progress. By linking ecological crisis with economic inequality, Robinson highlights the political dimension of environmental issues. Marginalized communities suffer most from pollution and resource depletion. Environmental harm is not accidental but structurally produced. The novel anticipates contemporary concerns about climate change, biodiversity loss, and sustainability. Robinson emphasizes that technological solutions alone cannot solve ecological problems. Fundamental changes in social values and economic systems are necessary.This ecological perspective is central to Robinson's broader literary project.

Myth, Ideology, and Power

In The Gold Coast, myths function as ideological tools that legitimize existing power structures. Corporate and political elites promote narratives of progress, freedom, and prosperity to maintain social control. Media, education, and advertising shape public consciousness. Information is filtered and manipulated to discourage critical thinking. Citizens are encouraged to focus on consumption rather than political participation. Robinson exposes how language and symbolism are used to conceal inequality and exploitation. Corporate slogans and promotional messages create an image of stability and success that contradicts lived reality. By revealing the constructed nature of these myths, Robinson empowers readers to question authority. Literature becomes a form of resistance that challenges dominant ideologies and encourages ethical reflection.The novel demonstrates that cultural change is essential for social transformation.

Resistance, Hope and Alternative Futures

Although The Gold Coast presents a largely pessimistic vision of technological society, Robinson does not completely abandon the possibility of resistance and change. Through subtle narrative moments, the novel suggests that awareness itself can become a form of rebellion. Jim McClendon's dissatisfaction with his work, his discomfort with consumer culture, and his longing for meaningful connection reflect a growing consciousness of systemic injustice. While his actions may appear limited, they represent the early stages of political and ethical awakening. Robinson implies that social transformation begins not with dramatic revolutions but with critical self-reflection and collective dialogue. Moreover, when The Gold Coast is read alongside The Wild Shore and Pacific Edge, it becomes clear that Robinson presents dystopia as only one possible future among many. The trilogy as a whole encourages readers to recognize that societies are shaped by human choices rather than technological inevitability. By presenting alternative models of living in his other novels, Robinson offers hope that more just, democratic, and ecologically balanced futures remain achievable. Thus, The Gold Coast functions not only as a warning but also as an invitation to imagine and work toward more humane social systems.

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Conclusion

Kim Stanley Robinson's The Gold Coast provides a powerful critique of modern American myths. Through its depiction of a technologically advanced yet socially impoverished society, the novel dismantles beliefs in automatic progress, individual freedom, and suburban prosperity. The protagonist's struggles reveal the limitations of personal rebellion in a system governed by corporate power. Robinson argues that meaningful change requires collective action, democratic participation, and ecological responsibility. By combining science fiction with social realism, Robinson creates a narrative that is both imaginative and politically relevant. The Gold Coast warns against uncritical acceptance of dominant cultural narratives and emphasizes that human values must guide development. Ultimately, the novel invites readers to reconsider their relationship with technology, nature, and society. In challenging destructive myths, Robinson offers the possibility of more just, sustainable, and humane futures.

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Myth And Truth in Shakespearean

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Abstract:

Drama and myth are like two peas in a pod. In Shakespeare's works, myths often become the foundation for dramatic narratives. In Hamlet, the myth of the ghost is a big deal. The ghost of King Hamlet appears demanding revenge for his murder. This supernatural element drives the plot and Hamlet's actions. Hamlet is a mythical trigger for the tragedy. Hamlet's obsessed with uncovering the truth behind the ghost's claims. In Hamlet, myth kinds blend with tragedy. The ghost is a mythic element. Macbeth is all about ambition gone wild. Prophecies: Witches predict Macbeth's rise and fall. Lady Macbeth pushes home to murder King Duncan. Macbeth plays show how unchecked emotions and external influences lead to chaos. Macbeth is steeped in myth. Blood and darkness is mythic themes of guilt, fate, and chaos. The witches' double, double spell give Macbeth is a dark mythic vibe. Othello is not a direct myth but draws on ancient tales and mythic themes, particularly the Greek myth of Hero and Leander, allusions to Prometheus, and Cupid, creating a tragic story of jealousy, racism, and manipulation, powerful symbols like Desdemona's handkerchief, ultimately becoming a mythic tragedy.

Keyword *: Myth, Truth, Tragedy, Drama.*

Introduction:

Shakespearean tragedy represents a complex dramatic form in which mythic imagination and psychological truth coexist in a dynamic relationship. Unlike classical tragedy, which often privileges fate as an overriding force, Shakespearean tragedy negotiates between supernatural determinism and human responsibility. Ghosts, witches, omens and cosmic disorder form a mythic framework, while intense psychological realism gives depth to characters and situations. This synthesis allows Shakespeare to present tragedy not merely as an outcome of destiny but as the result of moral choices made within a myth-inflected universe. This paper examines how Shakespeare employs myth and truth together to construct his tragic vision, focusing primarily on the moral framework being violated.

Objectives :

1] To examine the use of mythical and supernatural elements in Shakespearean Tragedies.
2] To analyse how Shakespeare presents psychological and moral truth through tragic characters.
3] To understand the interaction between fate (myth) and free will (truth) in tragic action.
4] To show how the fusion of myth and truth gives Shakespearean tragedy universal appeal.

Methodology : Analytical and Comparison Methods used.

Myth in Shakespearean Tragedy :

Myth refers to legendary, supernatural, symbolic, or traditional beliefs that go beyond ordinary reality. In Shakespeare's tragedies, myth appear as :

1] Supernatural elements – ghosts, witches, prophecies
2] Macbeth: The witches and their prophecies
3] Hamlet: The Ghost of King Hamlet
4] Classical and legendary references – fate, gods, cosmic order
5] Symbolism – darkness, blood, storms, madness

Role of Myth:

1] Creates a sense of destiny and inevitability
2] Heightens dramatic tension
3] Reflects the belief that human actions are connected to cosmic forces

Truth in Shakespearean Tragedy: Truth refers to psychological realism and real human experiences.
Shakespeare presents truth through:
1] Inner conflicts of characters
2] Hamlet's indecision
3] Macbeth's ambition and guilt
4] Othello's jealousy
5] Moral consequences of actions
6] Social and political realities – power, betrayal, loyalty

Role of Truth :

1] Make characters human and relatable
2] Shows that tragedy arises from human flaws (hamartia), not just fate
3] Truth provides the cause (human decision and weakness)

He regularly telescoped" time or altered biographies to heighten the emotional stakes.

1] Myth about Shakespeare Himself :

Many popular beliefs about how these tragedies were written are actually misconceptions. The Myth of the "Uneducated Genius" : It is often claimed Shakespeare was an unlettered "country bumpkin. The truth : While he did not attend university, he received a rigorous "classical" education in Stratford, where he mastered Latin and read the Roman myths like Ovid's Metamorphoses that heavily influenced the supernatural elements in his tragedies.

2] The Use of Classical Myth in Tragedy :

Shakespeare used actual Greek and Roman myths as "mirrors" to foreshadow the fate of his characters. Hamlet and Hercules :Hamlet frequently compares himself to Hercules usually to say he is not like him, using the myth of the Greek hero to highlight his own perceived inaction and lack of traditional "heroic" strength. The Witches in Macbeth : While often seen as simple "hags," they are heavily influenced by the Moirai the fates of Greek myth and the Norms of Norse legend –beings who weave the thread of destiny that the "truth" of the play eventually fulfills. Niobe in Hamlet : Hamlet compares his mother, Gertrude, to Niobe – a figure from myth who wept inconsolably for her children. By doing so, he highlights the "truth" of Gertrude's in his eyes insufficient mourning.

1] The "Universal Truths" of the Tragedies :

Beyond facts and fables, the "Truth" of a Shakespearean tragedy lies in its exploration of the human condition. The Tragic Flaw (Hamartia) :The Truth that even the greatest men have a "blind spot" (Othello's jealousy, Lear's pride) that leads to their ruin.The Inevitability of Fate: The truth that once a moral boundary is crossed like Macbeth killing Duncan, a chain reaction is set off that can not be stopped

Catharsis :

The Aristotelian truth that by watching a tragedy, the audience experiences a "purging" of pity and fear, leaving the theatre with a clearer understanding of morality.To understand Shakespeare's use of myth, one must look at his primary sources: Ovid's Metamorphoses and the "Revenge Tragedies" of Seneca. Myth and truth in Drama:

1] Myth and truth in Hamlet:

In Hamlet, the line between "myth" and "truth" is intentionally blurred.

The play itself is built upon ancient legends, but its power lies in how Shakespeare uses those myths to reveal uncomfortable psychological and political Truths.

1.The literary Myth: The Legend of Amleth
2.The Myth of "The Great Man" vs. The Truth of Human Frailty

Hamlet constantly compares the people around him to figures from Greek and Roman mythology to make sense of his world. The ultimate "Truth" Shakespeare explores is the universality of death. In the famous graveyard scene, the myth of social status is dismantled. Whether a man was a King or a jester, the truth is that they all end up as dust, Hamlet to stop overthinking and accept his fate, leading to his final line : "The readiness is all."

A] Truth and Myth in Macbeth :

Shakespeare was not a bad historian, he was a smart playwright. King James was a descendant of the real-life Banquo. He was a murder, but Shakespeare turned him into a noble hero. King James was terrified of witches and even wrote a book about Demonology. Shakespeare added the Three Witches specifically to capture the King's interest. The play was written shortly after the Gunpowder Plot. By making Macbeth a tormented, doomed regicide, Shakespeare was sending a clear message: killing a king leads to madness and hell. In the theatre world, the play is called "The Scottish Play" because of a long-standing myth that it is cursed.

The Myth : The Legend says Shakespeare used real spells for the withes' dialogue, which angered a coven of witches who then cursed the play for eternity.

The Reality : The "curse" likely stems from the play's high demand for stage combat and special effects, which led to more frequent injuries than other plays. The real lady Macbeth was named Gruoch. She was respected queen who helped stabilize the Scottish throne during her husband's long reign.

Conclusion:

1] Shakespeare's tragedies are powerful because they unite.
2] Myth ----} universal, symbolic, timeless.
3] Truth ----} realistic, psychological, human.

Summary:

This paper explores the intersection of classical mythology and Shakespearean tragedy. It argues that William Shakespeare did not merely "borrow" stories from Ovid or Seneca, but rather utilized mythic archetypes to elevate personal domestic struggles into universal cosmic Drama. By examining Hamlet, Macbeth, and Othello, we can see how the mythic "subtext" provides a framework for understanding fate, justice, and the human condition. William Shakespeare's tragedies are not mere plays; they are modern myths. By using the language of the ancients, he created a bridge between the classical world and the modern psyche. Whether it is Hamlet's Orestes-like indecision or Macbeth's Faustian bargain, the mythic foundations of these works ensure their immortality.

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Rewriting the Epic: Subaltern Mythology and Narrative Reversal in *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished*

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Abstract

Mythological retellings in contemporary Indian literature increasingly reinterpret classical epics through alternative narrative perspectives, challenging the authority of canonical traditions. Anand Neelakantan's Asura: Tale of the Vanquished (2012) represents one of the most influential revisionist narratives of the Ramayana, presenting the epic from the viewpoint of Ravana and the marginalized Asura community. By foregrounding the voices of the defeated, the novel interrogates the binary moral framework that traditionally categorizes Rama as the embodiment of virtue and Ravana as the symbol of evil. This research paper analyzes the novel through literary, mythological, and subaltern theoretical frameworks, focusing on narrative strategy, historiographical reinterpretation, socio-political symbolism, and the dismantling of heroic absolutism. The study demonstrates that the novel transforms mythological storytelling into a platform for examining issues of social hierarchy, cultural memory, and the politics of historical narration, thereby reshaping the interpretative possibilities of Indian epic literature.

Keywords: *Mythological Retelling; Ramayana Revisionism; Subaltern Perspective; Ravana Narrative; Historiographical Reinterpretation; Moral Ambiguity; Cultural Memory; Indian Mythological Fiction.*

Introduction

The Ramayana occupies a foundational position in South Asian literary, cultural, and religious traditions. Across centuries, the epic has functioned not only as a sacred narrative but also as a moral and social framework that defines ideals of dharma, kingship, gender roles, and ethical conduct. In most canonical versions, Rama is portrayed as the righteous hero, while Ravana is the demonic antagonist whose defeat symbolizes the triumph of moral order. Such portrayals established a rigid ethical binary that became embedded in cultural consciousness.

Contemporary literary retellings, however, increasingly challenge these inherited frameworks. Authors have begun re-examining epics from alternative viewpoints, reflecting broader intellectual movements such as postcolonial criticism, historiographical revisionism, and subaltern studies. Within this context, Anand Neelakantan's *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished* stands out for its systematic attempt to narrate the Ramayana from the perspective of the defeated—specifically Ravana and an ordinary Asura citizen named Bhadra.

The novel is not merely a retelling but a reinterpretation that questions the legitimacy of dominant narratives. It proposes that mythological history is constructed by victors, while the experiences of the defeated remain suppressed. By reconstructing Ravana's life as that of a complex ruler shaped by ambition, social exclusion, and political struggle, the novel dismantles the simplistic categorization of divine versus demonic. Simultaneously, Bhadra's narrative voice represents the ordinary people whose lives are often overlooked in epic storytelling. This dual narrative structure allows the novel to explore both elite and subaltern perspectives within mythological history.

This paper examines *Asura* as a work of mythological revisionism that transforms epic tradition into socio-political commentary. Through textual analysis and theoretical interpretation, the study explores how the novel reconfigures narrative authority, critiques hierarchical social structures, and reveals the ideological functions of mythological historiography.

Methodology

The research adopts a qualitative literary methodology grounded in interdisciplinary theoretical approaches:

1. **Textual Analysis:** Close reading of narrative structure, characterization, symbolism, and thematic motifs within the novel.
2. **Comparative Mythological Approach:** Examination of divergences between canonical Ramayana traditions and Neelakantan's reinterpretation.
3. **Subaltern Theory Framework:** Application of subaltern studies concepts to analyze the representation of marginalized voices and historical silencing.
4. **Cultural and Historiographical Criticism:** Exploration of how mythological narratives operate as instruments of cultural memory and ideological construction.

This integrated methodology allows for a comprehensive understanding of the novel's literary strategies and socio-cultural implications.

Narrative Reversal and the Perspective of the Vanquished

A defining feature of *Asura* is its narrative reversal. Traditional Ramayana narratives prioritize the divine perspective of Rama and his allies, framing the story as a moral conflict between righteousness and evil. Neelakantan reverses this perspective by narrating the epic through Ravana and Bhadra, thereby shifting narrative authority from the victors to the defeated.

Ravana's chapters reconstruct his life from childhood to downfall, presenting him as an intellectual, scholar, warrior, and ambitious ruler. Rather than depicting him as inherently evil, the novel portrays him as a tragic figure shaped by structural inequalities and personal ambition. His strengths—intelligence, determination, and leadership—coexist with flaws such as pride and authoritarianism, creating a psychologically complex character comparable to classical tragic heroes.

Bhadra's narrative voice further expands the novel's interpretative scope. As an ordinary citizen, he represents the masses whose experiences remain invisible in epic literature. His life illustrates the instability faced by common people during political upheavals, demonstrating that shifts in imperial power rarely transform everyday social realities. Through Bhadra, the novel critiques elite-centered historiography and emphasizes the lived experiences of marginalized populations.

Deconstruction of Moral Absolutism

One of the novel's central contributions lies in dismantling the rigid moral dichotomy embedded in traditional epic narratives. In canonical versions of the Ramayana, Rama embodies dharma while Ravana symbolizes adharma, reinforcing a clear ethical distinction. *Asura* complicates this binary by portraying both sides as morally ambiguous.

Ravana's policies sometimes reflect progressive ideals, such as meritocratic administration and resistance to hierarchical social structures. However, his authoritarian governance, expansionist ambitions, and personal ego also lead to destructive consequences. Similarly, the forces opposing him are not portrayed as purely virtuous; political alliances, strategic warfare, and ideological propaganda reveal that moral legitimacy is often shaped by narrative framing rather than objective ethical superiority.

This moral ambiguity transforms the epic conflict into a human political struggle rather than a cosmic battle between good and evil. The reinterpretation encourages readers to question inherited moral frameworks and consider how narratives shape perceptions of virtue and villainy.Beyond narrative revision, the novel uses mythological storytelling as an allegorical commentary on social hierarchy and power structures. The Asuras are depicted as a community historically marginalized by dominant elites who control religious and political institutions. Their struggle for dignity and recognition parallels real historical experiences of marginalized communities.

Through this allegorical structure, the novel critiques rigid caste hierarchies and social exclusion. Ravana's rise is portrayed as a challenge to entrenched social systems, while his eventual defeat symbolizes the persistence of dominant ideological orders. The narrative suggests that myths often encode social conflicts within symbolic storytelling, transforming political struggles into divine narratives that legitimize existing hierarchies.

The portrayal of imperial expansion, political propaganda, and ideological warfare further emphasizes the socio-political dimensions of mythological narratives. Battles between kingdoms are presented not only as military conflicts but also as contests over cultural legitimacy and historical memory.

Historiography and the Politics of Narrative Authority

A recurring theme in *Asura* is the subjectivity of history. The novel repeatedly asserts that historical narratives are shaped by those who possess power. Victorious civilizations institutionalize their versions of events through religious texts, literature, and cultural traditions, while alternative perspectives gradually disappear. By presenting the "Ravanayana," the novel symbolically reconstructs a suppressed historical voice.

This historiographical approach aligns with postmodern literary theory, which emphasizes the multiplicity of historical interpretations and the impossibility of a single authoritative narrative. The novel suggests that mythology should not be viewed as immutable truth but as a contested cultural archive subject to reinterpretation across time.

This perspective encourages readers to reconsider how cultural memory is constructed and how narrative authority influences collective understanding of history. The act of retelling the Ramayana from Ravana's viewpoint becomes a metaphor for recovering silenced histories and challenging ideological monopolies.

Subaltern Representation and Everyday Experience

Subaltern theory, which focuses on marginalized populations excluded from historical narratives, provides a useful framework for understanding the novel's thematic orientation. Bhadra's narrative functions as a subaltern voice that documents everyday struggles—poverty, displacement, social exclusion, and the unpredictability of political change.Unlike heroic characters whose lives are defined by grand events, Bhadra's existence reflects the continuity of hardship regardless of who rules. This portrayal underscores a critical insight: historical transformations often fail to improve the lives of ordinary people. By foregrounding such experiences, the novel expands mythological storytelling beyond royal courts and divine conflicts to include the realities of common citizens.The subaltern perspective also challenges the glorification of war. While epic narratives often celebrate victory and heroism, Bhadra's experiences reveal the devastating human cost of warfare—loss, displacement, and social disruption. This anti-heroic depiction adds a layer of realism rarely present in traditional epic literature.

Postmodern Mythological Retelling and Literary Significance

Asura: Tale of the Vanquished belongs to a broader literary movement that reinterprets mythological narratives through postmodern techniques such as narrative fragmentation, multiple viewpoints, and ideological reinterpretation. Such works transform mythology from static religious narrative into dynamic cultural discourse open to reinterpretation.The novel's popularity reflects contemporary readers' growing interest in alternative historical perspectives. By humanizing mythological characters and presenting them as participants in complex socio-political systems, the narrative bridges the gap between ancient epics and modern literary sensibilities. It demonstrates that mythology remains relevant not only as religious tradition but also as a medium for exploring contemporary issues such as identity, power, and social justice.

Critical Evaluation

While the novel succeeds in presenting an alternative perspective, it also raises questions regarding the balance between revisionism and historical authenticity. Some critics argue that reversing the moral polarity of epic narratives risks oversimplifying the original tradition. However, the purpose of revisionist mythology is not to replace one definitive narrative with another but to reveal the plurality of possible interpretations.

From a literary standpoint, the dual narrative structure enhances thematic depth by juxtaposing elite and subaltern experiences. Ravana's philosophical reflections and Bhadra's pragmatic observations create a layered narrative that combines epic grandeur with social realism. This structural innovation strengthens the novel's historiographical argument by demonstrating how different social positions generate distinct historical perspectives.

Conclusion

Anand Neelakantan's *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished* represents a significant contribution to contemporary mythological literature by reinterpreting the Ramayana through the perspective of the defeated. Through narrative reversal, moral complexity, and subaltern representation, the novel challenges the authority of canonical epic traditions and highlights the ideological processes underlying mythological historiography.

The work demonstrates that mythology is not merely a repository of sacred stories but also a dynamic cultural medium shaped by power, politics, and collective memory. By foregrounding marginalized voices and questioning the construction of heroic narratives, the novel encourages readers to critically engage with inherited cultural traditions and recognize the multiplicity of historical experiences embedded within them.

Ultimately, *Asura* illustrates that every epic contains untold stories beyond the official narrative. Recovering these suppressed perspectives not only enriches literary interpretation but also fosters a more inclusive understanding of history, culture, and identity. The novel's reinterpretation of the Ramayana therefore stands as an important example of how contemporary literature can transform ancient mythology into a platform for critical reflection on social structures, historical memory, and the politics of storytelling.

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Mandodari In *Ramayana*: A Feminist Re-Reading Of Silence, Wisdom, And Patriarchal Power

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Introduction

The *Ramayana*, attributed to the sage Valmiki, is one of the two great Sanskrit epics of ancient India, a foundational text in South Asian cultural, religious, and literary history. While the epic centers on Rama, Sita, and Ravana, female figures such as Sita, Kaikeyi, and *Mandodari* play crucial emotional and moral roles in shaping the narrative. *Mandodari*, queen of Lanka and wife of Ravana, is frequently overshadowed by the central conflict between Rama and Ravana, reducing her narrative presence in many retellings.

However, *Mandodari's* character raises critical questions that a feminist reading illuminates: What does her silence signify? Is she a passive victim of patriarchal destiny, or does her comportment signify strategic resistance and ethical authority? How does the epic both constrain and elevate her within patriarchal power structures?

This paper argues that *Mandodari's* narrative presence her wisdom, strategic restraint, and moral clarity — reflects a nuanced site of resistance within a patriarchal epic tradition. Her silence is not absence but a form of embodied agency; her wisdom reveals a moral critique of masculine power; and her function within the epic reveals the costs and possibilities of female wisdom in patriarchal systems.

Mandodari: Narrative Position and Traditional Portrayal

Mandodari appears primarily in the Sundara Kanda and Yuddha Kanda sections of the *Ramayana*. She is introduced as the daughter of Mayasura and Hema, a princess of great beauty and virtue. Married to Ravana, the powerful king of Lanka, *Mandodari* stands apart in the epic for her constant embodiment of dharma (ethical duty).

In mainstream readings, *Mandodari* is often portrayed as:

Devoted wife who upholds loyalty to her husband despite his moral failings.

Voice of caution, who warns Ravana against abducting Sita.

Silent moral witness to the actions of men whose ambitions lead to destruction.

While these depictions are not inherently dismissive, they frequently minimize *Mandodari's* agency by situating her in roles that emphasize restraint over action, loyalty over challenge, and silence over confrontation. A feminist re-reading challenges the assumption that silence and restraint equate to passivity or powerlessness.

Silence and Power: Rethinking *Mandodari's* Voice

Feminist scholars have long explored how silence in literature particularly that of women cannot be simplistically equated with absence or subordination (Cixous, Irigaray, Spivak). Silence, in many patriarchal narratives, functions as both a tool of containment and a space of subversive resistance.

In *Mandodari's* case, her silence:

Highlights her moral clarity she repeatedly counsels Ravana to return Sita to Rama, showcasing ethical insight that contrasts with Ravana's hubris.

Reveals the limits of speech in patriarchal structures her warnings go unheeded, not for lack of moral authority but due to the overwhelming patriarchal power that privileges male ambitions over female counsel.

Positions *Mandodari* as a witness rather than a participant in male power struggles, suggesting that the epic compresses powerful emotions into silent endurance as a way of containing female ethical power.
Thus, *Mandodari's* silence can be read not as absence of power, but as a *strategic form of moral resistance.* In resisting confrontation, she preserves her own ethical integrity while exposing the destructive arrogance of Ravana and the men around her.

Wisdom and Ethical Authority: *Mandodari's* Moral Vision
Mandodari's wisdom is most visible in her repeated counsel to Ravana. Before Ravana's final battle, she appeals to him, highlighting the righteousness of Rama's cause and the peril of annihilating his own lineage through pride. This counsel is not an emotional plea but an *ethical argument grounded in dharmic values*.
A feminist reading locates *Mandodari's* wisdom as:
Embodied ethical knowledge - wisdom rooted in lived experience, moral reflection, and relational responsibility.
A critique of unchecked masculine ambition - her warnings expose how patriarchal systems valorise conquest and honour at the expense of life, balance, and ethical harmony.
A performative counterargument to Ravana's egoistic assertion of power - *Mandodari* embodies an alternative logic of Kingship that values dharma above ego.
Despite her clear moral authority, *Mandodari's* advice is ignored. This narrative dynamic illustrates how patriarchal power systems often marginalize or silence female wisdom when it conflicts with male ambition.

Patriarchal Structures and Gendered Power Dynamics
A critical examination of *Mandodari's* position reveals the broader gendered politics of the *Ramayana*. Patriarchal structures in the epic:
Privilege male action over female counsel.
Frame female loyalty within relational structures rather than individual moral agency.
Instrumentalize women as symbols of honour or virtue rather than autonomous agents.
Mandodari's positionality as queen places her within power yet her agency is *curtailed by the patriarchal logic that defines power primarily as military conquest and male honour.* Her ethical stance, though morally superior, is structurally excluded from decision-making.
Here, a feminist critique illustrates how the epic reflects and reinforces patriarchal norms:
Female counsel in patriarchal narratives is permitted only as emotional or relational input, not as strategic authority.
Male power claims are unilaterally validated through force, regardless of ethical consequences.
Women's moral labour is essential yet unacknowledged they prevent ruin through emotional labour but have no institutional voice.
In *Mandodari's* case, this patriarchal contradiction is stark: she embodies moral authority but lacks narrative power.

Mandodari's Silence as Ethical Resistance
The feminist re-reading interprets *Mandodari's* silence as **ethical resistance** rather than submissive quietude. Her refusal to verbally confront Ravana in anger - even when his choices lead to ruin - reflects several layers of feminist significance:
Strategic restraint: *Mandodari* chooses not to escalate conflict through denouncement, instead privileging reasoned counsel grounded in dharmic wisdom.
Moral endurance: Her silence is a means of preserving her own ethical identity amidst destructive masculine power.
Witnessing as moral action: Feminist theorists have argued that witnessing particularly in conditions of violence is itself a form of ethical agency. *Mandodari* witnesses the tragic consequences of Ravana's choices and embodies the moral memory of what could have been prevented.

Thus, silence becomes a *form of agency that is both oppositional and self-preserving* a powerful feminist trope that challenges simplistic readings of female passivity.

Motherhood, Loss, and Female Agency

Another dimension of Mandodari's character is her role as mother to Meghanada (Indrajit), Akshaya Kumara, and others. Meghanada's death in the war and Ravana's eventual end place Mandodari in a position of compounded loss. Feminist readings often examine how motherhood intersects with patriarchal violence. In *Mandodari's* case:

Motherhood becomes an embodiment of grief that highlights the cost of patriarchal ambitions the warrior ethos that ravages families.

Her mourning is not just personal but symbolic of the devastation of entire social orders when male honour trumps moral restraint.

Mandodari's final moments consoling Ravana's surviving kin and acknowledging the transcendence of dharma exemplify a feminine ethical framework that values *restoration and communal care over personal vengeance or egoistic assertions.*

This maternal dimension enriches the feminist reading: *Mandodari* is not merely a figure of loss but a moral witness to the ramifications of patriarchal violence.

Mandodari in Later Retellings and Cultural Memory

In various regional retellings, *Mandodari's* character sometimes assumes expanded roles. Feminist scholars note that such variations often reflect localized perspectives on female agency, marital relations, and moral authority. These divergent portrayals indicate that *Mandodari's* character is *not monolithic*; rather, her representation varies across cultural contexts, suggesting that her narrative potential resists singular definitions.

Conclusion

A feminist re-reading of *Mandodari* in the *Ramayana* reveals a character both constrained and empowered by her narrative context. Her wisdom, moral clarity, and strategic silence function as subtle forms of resistance within patriarchal structures that valorise male action and dismiss female counsel.

Mandodari's silence should thus be understood not as absence of power but as a *complex ethical stance that both critiques and transcends patriarchal norms*. Her narrative presence invites readers to reconsider how voices labelled as "quiet" or "subordinate" may, in fact, embody forms of agency not readily recognized within traditional readings.

Ultimately, *Mandodari's* story challenges us to rethink the meaning of power itself: is it measured only in overt action and conquest, or can it be found in moral endurance, ethical wisdom, and the courage to witness truth in the face of overwhelming patriarchal force?

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Greek Mythology Archetypes in The Harry Potter Series

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Abstract:

The present research paper attempts to explore the significant influence of Greek mythology on J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter" series, illustrating how mythological elements especially from Greek, enrich the character development and thematic depth. Rowling projects traits and similarities in the mythological figures and the characters , social rituals, customs and tradition in Harry Potter series. Furthermore, the paper discusses the evidence and significance of mythological creatures such as the phoenix, unicorn,centaurs etc. That resonate with the mythical bird and animals from ancient myths. The paper emphasizes how Rowling's inclusion of these elements not only enriches the narrative but also connects the modern readers to timeless themes of heroism, sacrifice, wonder, magical adventures , eternal conflict between good and evil inherent in Greek myths.

Keywords*: Greek mythology, J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter, Athena, Perseus,archetypes, centaurs, unicorn, phoenix, heroism.*

The world of Harry Potter has lured the minds of millions of people, young and old as it ventures them into the masterfully crafted magical universe impregnate with subtle entities of fantasy, magic and myths. The world of Harry Potter is complex and enriched with the mythical phenomenon. Rowling successfully intertwines its themes, characters and narratives from a variety of ancient myths; among them mostly the characters, myths and narratives from the classical Greece and Rome.She utilizes the names from the history and myths of classical antiquity to refer to famous witches and wizards.

The central figure of the Harry Potter series,Harry is empowered with both god- and hero-like qualities throughout the seven books. He almost narrowly escapes from death occurrences twice. The first time he takes a killing curse unwillingly and unknowingly out of reputation, fame and recognition in the wizarding world. The second time he undertakes the adventure into the underworld willingly to rid the world of a monster similar in the traditional way of the heroes of ancient Greece. Rowling's magical world echoes our normal empirical world in the human attributes such as selfless love, sacrifice, bond of friendship etc. and it make the fantasy universe entertaining as well as credible.

The British children's author Joanne Kathleen Rowling's '*Harry Potter'* books chiefly written for the children, started with the publication of '*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*' (1997), '*Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*' (1998), '*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*' (1999), '*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*' (2000), '*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*' (2003), '*Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*' (2005). The last book in this sequel is '*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*' (2007).

The Harry Potter series is a continuation of fantasy literature written for the children. However it displays a rich tapestry of diverse themes and fascinating accounts of heroic deeds derived from the ancient Greek mythology. The traits of Greek mythology are very rampant in the series.The protagonist's adventure, trials, and ultimate growth are the key elements of the Greek mythology. Harry Potter embodies these archetype, reminiscent of heroes from Greek mythology such as Hercules and Perseus. Like these mythological figures, Harry emerges from humble life as an orphan who challenges the formidable adversaries. His battles against his arch enemy Voldemort can be compared to the labors of Hercules, who overcomes all great odds by the virtues of valour and strong will power.Harry's heroic exploits at Hogwarts

are applicable to Joseph Campbell's archetypal theory of Hero's Journey in three stages such as 'Departure', 'Initiation' and 'Return'. The critic, Campbell writes about this journey:

> A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder; fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won; the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man **(Campbell 2008:23)**.

With each novel, Harry emerges as a good wizard who is entitled to defend the wizarding community with his skill in defence, aggression, and containment.The children's literary critic, Jack Zipes, relates his association with the classical heroes as he writes:

> "He is one of the mythical chosen heroes, called upon by powers greater than him to rescue his friends and the world from diabolical evil. He is David, Tom Thumb, Jack the Giant Killer, Alladin and Horatio Alger all in one" **(Zipes 1979: 175).**

Harry Potter series exemplify a fine amalgamation of mythological archetypes, creatures, and themes. J.K. Rowling creates a rich narrative that resonates with timeless human experiences. Harry resembles with Perseus and other Greek heroes who appears as an orphaned chosen one facing a monstrous enemy (Voldemort), aided by divine gifts like his mother's protection.Charles Kingsley depicts the heroic deeds of Perseus, the Gorgon-Slayer that reverberates Harry's adventures as follows:

> Led by Athena I won from the grey-haired terrible sisters
> Secrets hidden from men----They showed me the perilous pathway
> Over the waterless ocean, the valley that led to the Gorgon.
> Her too I slew in my craft, Medusa, the beautiful horror;
> Taught by Athena I slew her, and saw not herself, but her image.**(Green 2009: 85)**

Prof. Minerva McGonagall from Hogwarts with her god-like, omnipotent, and loving role resembles with Athene, the ancient Greek goddess of wisdom, warfare, and handicraft.She supports and protects Harry in his adventurous endeavours. She represents the strength, wisdom, and courage.The heroes in the series are often characterized by their capacity for love, loyalty, and self-sacrifice, rather than just magical power. Harry often displays reckless bravery and a willingness to face death. He is supported by his friends and mentors on his mission. His friend, Hermione represents intellectual strength and ingenuity, while Ron represents loyalty and emotional support. The headmaster of Hogwarts, Albus Dumbledore, maintains his position as the omniscient and benevolent counselor of Harry. Writer, Phyllis Morris writes about his relation with Harry as follows:

> The parallels between Dumbledore and Merlin do not end with the protection of the hero in danger …. In addition to both characters sporting long, flowing beards (and blue eyes, according to T.H.White), Merlin was King Arthur's mentor and guide, as Dumbledore has been Harry's guide and mentor **(Web).**

Rubeus Hagrid is a big-hearted half-giant keeper. He also acts as Harry's mentor and unofficial guardian at Hogwarts. Harry's Hogwart friend, Neville Longbottom turns into a brave leader who destroys a Horcrux, and Dobby the House-Elf demonstrates ultimate bravery and devotion by sacrificing his life to save Harry and his friends. Severus Snape is also one of the most heroic figures who protects Harry out of love for Lily Potter.

Rowling exploits the Greek archetypal themes in the series such as heroes versus monsters.The series is populated with the wizards, witches, non-magical people(Muggle),monsters, mythical creatures etc.The role of fate in *Harry Potter* is an active force often represented by magical, uncontrollable, or preordained factors. Trelawney's prophecy that "either must die at the hand of the other" dictates the inevitable final battle between Harry and Voldemort. This prophecy joins their fates together making their conflict a central and inevitable struggle, transforming the series from a fairy tale to a mythological quest. Several elements act as instruments of fate such as wands, the sorting hat, the goblet of fire etc.The wands have the power to choose their masters as they exploit the magical spells with it.The wizarding characters exploit curses and spells to defeat their opponents. The curse called 'Reducto' can explode things. Use of 'Colloportus' can seal

anything. The spell of 'Alohomora' opens the sealed things. The spell of 'Expelliarmus' can disarms the 134 opponent. By use of spell 'Accio wand', Hermione snatches the wand from the opponent's hand. The curse 'Impedimenta' gives a strong knock to the opponent. By the use of spell 'Silencio', the user can extinguish the voice of others. The spell of 'Petrificus totalus' can snap arms and legs of opponent together. The use of spell such as 'Diffindo' can release the person from the clutch. The use of curse like 'Crucio' inflicts extreme pain to the opponent that leaves the victim twitching and screaming in Agony.The protagonist and his friends are empowered with the magical spells.

The sorting hat functions as judging entity that speaks, sings, and analyzes human psychology to place students at Hogwarts. It can sing, move and select the House for the students. Harry is destined to die while destroying the piece of Voldemort's soul within him. However, Harry willingly embrace this fate that makes him a true hero.Like Greek mythical hero he struggles against prophecies that dominate future. Rowling uses the concept of the prophecy surrounding Harry and Voldemort, which foretells their intertwined destinies.

The Harry Potter series is quite popular by its profound use of mythical and magical creatures. Rowling's most mythical creatures are withdrawn from Greek mythology.For instance,in Greek mythology, centaurs are known for their dual identity as half- human and half- horse beings suggesting the conflict between civilization and barbarism. Rowling's centaurs, such as Firenze, Ronan and Bane, exemplify the complexities of their existence within the magical world.They reside in the Forbidden Forest.Characters like Sirius Black (a dog) or Remus Lupin (a werewolf) display the blending of human consciousness with animal forms. While Sirius Black, Harry's godfather, a fugitive from the Ministry of Magic,being an animagus, can turns himself into a large black dog.The name '*Sirius'* refers the Dog Star, the symbol of Egyptian goddess Isis.Professor Lupin as a student of Hogwarts was a werewolf. During the full moon, he used to transform into a fully fledged monster once a month.Peter Pettigrew, Sirus Black, Remus Lupin and James Potter turn out to be best friends at Hogwarts. They tried the Animagus transformation to save their friend Lupin who has turned into a werewolf.Peter Pettigrew transforms himself into a rat named Scabbers living as pet rat of Ron for twelve years.

Animagus is a wizard who can transform into an expected animal without losing the magical powers.In achieving the form of 'animagus', wizards need to learn to convert themselves at will into a form of a particular animal. What animal they turn into depends on the type of inner quality of the wizard wishing to be an animagus. Professor McGonagall can change herself into a cat, Harry's father James Potter becomes a stag, Sirius Black as a black dog, Peter Pettigrew changes into a rat. According to a scholar, Edmund Kern, the mythical pets in this book such as grindylow, hinkypunk, kappa, pixies, and poltergeist, "are symbolic of the unexpected difficulties and uncertainties that life so indifferently places in an individual's way" (**Kern 2003: 200)**. The young witch, Nymphadora Tonks is one of the members of the Order of the Phoenix. She is a Meta morph magus. She excels in concealment and Disguise. Working as an Auror, she can change her appearance at will.With her magical wand, she collects Harry's books, clothes, telescope, scales, cauldron, broomstick into his trunk and it flies ahead of them.

Similarly, the phoenix Fawkes, Dumbledore's loyal companion is a powerful symbol of rebirth, derived from ancient mythologies. In Greek tradition, the phoenix is associated with the sun and represents renewal and immortality.This trait of the phoenix serves as a metaphor for Harry's journey, particularly in moments of despair and loss.

Rowling has created new supernatural characters in this book. One of them is Buckbeak, the Hippogriff introduced to pupils during the Care of Magical Creatures class of Hagrid. The Hippogriff has the bird-like head and forelegs of a griffin attached to the body of a horse.During the Triwizard Tournament, while accomplishing the third task, Harry encounters a sphinx. "It had the body of an overlarge lion; great clawed paws, and a long yellowish tail ending in a brown tuft'. It's head …. was that of a women".The sphinx is a creature from Egyptian mythology. It has a strange form and enigmatic manner that makes it a symbol of mystery. Harry is asked to solve the riddle by sphinx.These anthropomorphic characters are instrumental to disclose the complex nature of themes, such as morality, prejudice, and empathy. A central, deeply magical

ritual is the sacrifice in love which occurs when Lily, mother of Harry dies for him. Even Harry also sacrifices himself in Deathly Hallows but survives by magical protection through the power of love.Harry appears as real life-like character as a well-known critic, Edmund Kern, rightly comments:

Rowling makes him the product of a past and gives him the intellect to recognize it's shaping influence upon the future. And she places him in a near contemporary world, resembling our own, which combines numerous elements, both familiar and fantastic drawn from history, legend, and myth **(Kern 2003:207)**

In conclusion, J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter" series stands as a testimonial of the rich traditions of Greek mythology that have influenced narrative structures and character archetypes. Her series emerge as a composite art of age-old traditional knowledge incorporated into fantasy genre.The protagonist,Harry resembles with the ancient classical heroes in their perseverance, loyalty, valour, indomitable courage, sacrificial nature etc. His battle against Voldemort retells the eternal universal conflict between good versus evil.The hero's ultimate success reveals the significance of courage, loyalty, and friendship.Rowling's use of magical creatures and mythical characters symbolize the rich, diverse and varied aspects of human life.Throughout the series, the protagonist and his friends encounter the adversaries. They defeat them with their natural human qualities such as love, sacrifice, friendship although they are fully equipped with magical powers.It motivates the children to redefine their roles as a human being in the contemporary world. Rowling's use of Greek mythological archetypes in the form of theme and characters in the Harry Potter series is the manifestation of bygone culture that glorifies the human courage, kindness, empathy, friendship, and indomitable spirit which help the mortal heroes to combat against their fate and fortune.It inculcates the immortal virtues of humanity in the minds of young readers through fantasy literature.

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Women in Myths: A Comparative Study of Gandhari and Kunti in Mahabharata

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Abstract

The Mahabharata presents a vast and complex portrayal of human relationships, moral dilemmas and social structures. Among its many characters, Gandhari and Kunti stand out as two significant female figures whose lives profoundly influence the course of the epic. Both are queens and mothers, yet their experiences, responses to patriarchy and forms of powers differ considerably. A comparative study of Gandhari and Kunti allows for deeper understanding of how women in mythology negotiate duty, sacrifice, morality and she represented the male dominated society. This paper examines Gandhari and Kunti as contrasting models of womanhood in the Mahabharata. While Gandhari represents moral protest and symbolic sacrifice, Kunti represents adaptability and strategic intelligence, emotional endurance. "Together, they show the different ways women gain power and influence even when society limits them."

Keywords *- patriarchy, human relationships, dilemmas, domination, sacrifice*

Introductions

The Ramayana and Mahabharata is one of the greatest Epic of Indian culture, literature, philosophical and ethical texts. Attributed to Sage Vyasa, it is not merely a story of dynastic war but profound exploration. It is not merely a story of a dynastic war but a profound exploration of human relationships, moral dilemmas, duty (*dharma*), power, and justice. The epic presents a complex society where personal desires often conflict with social responsibilities, making it a timeless reflection of human life. Gandhari and Kunti are two of the most important female figures in the Mahabharta. Both are queens and mothers, and their lives are closely connected to the central conflict between the Kauravas and the Pandavas.

Gandhari

Gandhari, the wife of the blind king Dhritarashtra and mother of the Kauravas, is known for her immense sacrifice and moral strength. Her decision to blindfold herself symbolizes both devotion and silent protest against a fate imposed upon her. Though largely silent, Gandhari emerges as a powerful moral voice, especially after the destruction of her sons. Gandhari is mainly remembered for her suffering and curse, but she also gives powerful blessings, which show her spiritual strength and moral authority.

Kunti

Kunti, the wife of King Pandu and mother of the Pandavas, represents endurance, wisdom, and emotional resilience. Her life is marked by hardship, exile, and moral struggle, particularly in relation to her firstborn son Karna. Unlike Gandhari, Kunti actively guides and advises her sons, playing a crucial role in shaping their character and destiny. Through her strength and adaptability, she exemplifies the inner power of women who survive and lead within patriarchal constraints.

Social Background and Marital Context

Gandhari is introduced as a princess of Gandhara who is married to Dhritarashtra, the blind king of Hastinapura. Her marriage is arranged without full disclosure of her husband's disability, reflecting the lack of considerations granted to women in marital decisions. As queen, Gandhari holds honor but remains excluded from political authority.

Kunti on the other hand, is married to Pandu, the king of Hastinapura, whose curse prevents him from leading a normal marital life. Kunti's marital experience is marked by loneliness, responsibility, and early widowhood. Unlike Gandhari's life of royal confinement, Kunti's life is shaped by displacement, exile, and constant struggle.

Nature of Sacrifice

Sacrifice is central to both characters, but it manifests differently. Gandhari's sacrifice is immediate and symbolic. Her decision to blindfold herself after marriage is traditionally seen as the highest form of wifely devotion. However, it can also be interpreted as a silent protest against a fate imposed upon her without consent.This act becomes a lifelong reminder of denial and restraint.

Kunti's sacrifice is gradual and emotional. Her abandonment of Karna, suppression of maternal instinct, endurance of widowhood, and struggle to raise her sons under harsh conditions reflect a continuous process of self-denial. Unlike Gandhari's visible sacrifice, Kunti's suffering remains largely internal.

Both women experience intense emotional suffering. Gandhari loses all her sons in the war, while Kunti suffers lifelong guilt over abandoning Karna and endures exile and hardship. Their pain reflects the emotional burden placed on women.

Motherhood and Moral Responsibility

Motherhood defines both Gandhari and Kunti, yet their maternal roles differ significantly. Gandhari is the mother of the Kauravas, whose actions ultimately lead to destruction. Despite her moral awareness, she fails to restrain her sons, revealing the limited authority of women within patriarchal family structures. Her motherhood is tragic, marked by helplessness and loss.

Kunti, as the mother of the Pandavas, plays an active role in shaping her son's values. She guides them during exile, advises them during crises, and instills resilience and moral discipline. Kunti's motherhood is dynamic and influential, highlighting her practical concern.

Forms of power and representation

The power exercised by Gandhari and Kunti operates in different forms. Gandhari's power is primarily moral and symbolic. Her curse upon Krishna after the war demonstrates that her words possess ethical and cosmic weight. Although she lacks political authority, her moral judgment cannot be ignored.

Kunti's agency is practical and strategic. She makes crucial decisions regarding her sons' marriages, alliances, and survival. Her influence is subtle yet effective, operating within domestic and emotional spaces.

Response to Petrarchy

Gandhari and Kunti respond differently to patriarchal constraints. Gandhari responds through silence and restraint. Her blindfold symbolizes both submission and resistance, reflecting an inward form of protest. Her silence becomes a moral commentary on injustice.

Kunti responds through adaptation. She works within patriarchal boundaries to protect her sons and secure their future. Her strength lies in negotiation rather than confrontation.

Feminist Perspective

From a feminist perspective, Gandhari and Kunti represent two survival strategies within patriarchy. Gandhari's suffering exposes the emotional consequences of enforced obedience, while Kunti's endurance reveals the burden of responsibility placed on women. Modern feminist readings reinterpret Gandhari's blindfold as resistance rather than devotion and view Kunti's silence as a survival mechanism rather than weakness. Both characters challenge simplistic notions of ideal womanhood.

Cultural and Symbolic Significance

Culturally, Gandhari symbolizes moral conscience and suppressed grief, while Kunti represents maternal strength and resilience. Their stories continue to shape Indian perceptions of motherhood, sacrifice, and ethical responsibility. They serve as archetypes that influence literature, social values, and gender expectations.

Research Objectives

1) To study the portrayal of Gandhari and Kunti as major female characters in the Mahabharata.
2) To examine how patriarchal social structures shape the experiences and choices of Gandhari and Kunti.
3) To compare the form of power, and resistance exercised by Gandhari and Kunti within social limitations.

Research Methodology

This paper is based on secondary data. Interpretations may vary due to different translations and versions of the epic.The study focuses on literary analysis rather than historical accuracy.

Subject Discussion

The Mahabharata presents women not merely as supporting figures but as central forces shaping the moral and emotional framework of the epic. Among them, Gandhari and Kunti stand out as two powerful maternal figures whose lives are marked by sacrifice, suffering, and moral strength. Though both belong to the same epic and share similar social constraints, their responses to fate and duty differ significantly, offering a rich ground for comparative study.

Approach

The present study is based on a comparative approach to examine the characters of Gandhari and Kunti as represented in the Mahabharata. The epic is approached as a mythological and literary text that reflects the social, cultural, and ethical values of ancient Indian society. Focusing on their roles as mothers, wives, and moral figures. Their life choices, sacrifices, responses to suffering, and expressions of agency are compared to understanding different models of feminine strength.

Conclusion

Gandhari and Kunti share fundamental similarities in their experiences of sacrifice, motherhood, and suffering within a patriarchal framework. Their stories highlight that women in the Mahabharata are not passive figures but morally conscious individuals whose silent endurance shapes the ethical and emotional core of the epic.

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Manufacturing Myth, Erasing Memory: A Historiographical Reassessment of Cultural Narratives in South Asian Literature

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Abstract

This paper interrogates the processes through which historical myths are constructed, circulated, and institutionalized within South Asian literary traditions. It argues that cultural narratives often emerge not as neutral reflections of the past but as products of ideological mediation shaped by colonial historiography, nationalist discourse, and contemporary identity politics. Drawing upon historiographical debates, literary archives, and sociological interpretations of collective memory, the study reassesses how selective remembrance and strategic forgetting have structured public consciousness. The paper situates literary texts as both repositories of cultural memory and instruments of myth-making. Through a critical reading of colonial records, nationalist reinterpretations, and modern literary representations, it demonstrates how narratives of civilizational conflict and cultural homogeneity were historically manufactured. Statistical evidence from colonial census classifications and postcolonial educational curricula is examined to illustrate the institutionalization of such myths. The analysis foregrounds the tension between archive and imagination in shaping historical consciousness. Employing theoretical frameworks of collective memory, postcolonial historiography, and discourse analysis, the study re-evaluates canonical narratives within South Asian literature. The findings reveal that erasures of plural histories were often deliberate and politically motivated. By restoring marginalized voices and syncretic traditions, the paper advocates a historiographical approach attentive to multiplicity and social complexity. It concludes that literature must be read not merely as aesthetic production but as a contested terrain of memory, power, and identity formation.

Keywords : *Historiography; Collective Memory; Cultural Myth; South Asian Literature; Colonial Knowledge Systems; Identity Politics; Archive and Narrative.*

Introduction

Historical narratives in South Asia have long oscillated between mythic glorification and strategic erasure. Modern historiography indicates that colonial administrative exercises such as the Census of India (1871–1931) rigidified religious identities, categorizing populations into fixed communal blocs (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2012, pp. 44–47). Such statistical enumeration transformed fluid social identities into hardened political categories. By 1901, over 94% of the subcontinent's population was classified explicitly by religious identity, reinforcing communal consciousness through bureaucratic inscription. These processes coincided with the rise of print capitalism; between 1880 and 1920, vernacular presses increased dramatically, circulating historical narratives aligned with emerging nationalist ideologies.

Literature became a powerful site where these newly codified identities were either reproduced or contested. Colonial historians such as James Mill divided Indian history into Hindu, Muslim, and British periods, a tripartite scheme that deeply influenced subsequent literary imagination. Postcolonial scholarship, however, demonstrates that precolonial societies were marked by layered affiliations—linguistic, occupational, and regional—rather than exclusive communal identities. The erasure of shared cultural practices from mainstream historiography contributed to what may be termed "manufactured memory."

In contemporary South Asia, textbook revisions and political rhetoric frequently invoke selective pasts. Surveys conducted by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) indicate that historical content revisions have increased significantly since the 1990s, reflecting ideological shifts in

curricular representation. Such data highlight how myth-making continues within institutional frameworks. This study therefore reassesses cultural narratives in South Asian literature by situating them within broader historiographical transformations. It seeks to decode how myths are constructed, how memories are suppressed, and how literature mediates between archive and ideology.

Objectives

1. To examine how historiography has contributed to the construction of cultural myths in South Asia.
2. To analyze the role of colonial knowledge systems in institutionalizing communal narratives.
3. To investigate how literature functions as both a repository and producer of collective memory.
4. To reassess canonical narratives in light of sociological theories of memory and power.
5. To foreground plural and syncretic traditions marginalized within dominant historiography.

Review of Literature

1. **Benedict Anderson (1983)** conceptualized nations as "imagined communities," emphasizing print capitalism's role in shaping collective memory.
2. **Eric Hobsbawm (1983)** examined the "invention of tradition," arguing that modern identities are often retroactively constructed.
3. **Romila Thapar (2002)** critiqued communal historiography and emphasized plural historical processes in early India.
4. **Richard Eaton (2000)** challenged simplistic narratives of civilizational conflict in medieval India.
5. **Sheldon Pollock (2006)** analyzed the cultural politics of language and power in premodern South Asia.
6. **Partha Chatterjee (1993)** interrogated nationalist historiography and the construction of cultural identity.
7. **Jan Assmann (2011)** developed the concept of cultural memory, emphasizing structured remembrance.

Theoretical Framework

1. **Collective Memory Theory (Halbwachs / Assmann)** – Memory is socially constructed and institutionally mediated; what societies remember or forget reflects power relations.
2. **Postcolonial Historiography (Said / Chatterjee)** – Colonial epistemology shaped knowledge production, often essentializing cultural identities.
3. **Discourse and Power (Foucault)** – Narratives operate within regimes of truth, legitimizing certain interpretations while marginalizing others.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative secondary research methodology. Primary reliance is placed on published historiographical works, literary texts, archival studies, census reports (1871–1931), and peer-reviewed scholarship. Textual analysis and discourse analysis are employed to interpret narrative structures. Statistical references from colonial census data and educational curriculum revisions are used illustratively. No primary fieldwork was conducted.

Analysis

1. Colonial Census and the Fixing of Identity

The Census of India beginning in 1871 institutionalized religious classification as a primary administrative category. By the 1901 Census under H. H. Risley, communities were rigidly enumerated by religion and caste, producing quantifiable identities where earlier affiliations were layered and situational. Over 94% of the population was categorized explicitly under religious headings, embedding communal consciousness within bureaucratic governance. This statistical fixation transformed flexible social boundaries into hardened communal blocs. The process exemplifies how colonial knowledge production manufactured social divisions that later informed literary and nationalist narratives.

2. Tripartite Periodization of Indian History

James Mill's early nineteenth-century division of Indian history into Hindu, Muslim, and British periods imposed a civilizational binary upon a complex past. This periodization ignored economic, linguistic, and regional

continuities across centuries. Despite lacking linguistic knowledge of Indian sources, Mill's framework influenced colonial textbooks for over 100 years. Educational syllabi in the early twentieth century replicated this structure, presenting medieval India primarily as a phase of "Muslim rule." Such historiographical simplification facilitated mythic representations of uninterrupted religious conflict in literary and public discourse.

3. Print Capitalism and Narrative Circulation

Between 1880 and 1920, the number of vernacular newspapers and presses increased dramatically across Bengal, Bombay, and the United Provinces. By 1914, over 1,000 newspapers were circulating in British India. Print capitalism standardized selective historical interpretations, especially through serialized historical novels and pamphlets. These publications often romanticized ancient pasts while portraying medieval centuries as civilizational decline. The rapid expansion of print created a shared but homogenized memory structure, amplifying particular myths while marginalizing plural narratives preserved in regional traditions.

4. Literary Canon Formation

Colonial universities established in 1857 at Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras formalized literary canons aligned with imperial priorities. Texts that reinforced distinct civilizational identities were institutionalized, while syncretic and multilingual works received limited scholarly attention. For example, Indo-Persian literary contributions were frequently separated from "Indian literature" in curricular categorization. By the early twentieth century, syllabi reflected cultural compartmentalization rather than interconnected traditions. Canon formation thus operated as a mechanism of epistemic control, shaping historical consciousness through selective inclusion and exclusion.

5. Erasure of Syncretic Traditions

Composite cultural practices—shared festivals, devotional movements, and linguistic hybridity—were often omitted from official historical narratives. Studies of post-2000 textbook revisions indicate reductions in chapters addressing composite medieval culture in several state curricula. The diminishing presence of Bhakti–Sufi interactions in educational content illustrates institutional memory management. Such erasure contributes to the perception of segregated civilizational histories, despite substantial archival and literary evidence of shared traditions.

6. Nationalist Myth-Making

Twentieth-century nationalist discourse frequently constructed a glorified ancient past juxtaposed against a supposedly oppressive medieval era. Literary works and political speeches often adopted this temporal dichotomy to mobilize collective identity. Statistical data on textbook publications between 1950 and 1990 reveal heavy emphasis on ancient civilization achievements compared to comparatively limited coverage of medieval socio-cultural synthesis. This selective glorification reinforced a mythic narrative of cultural rupture rather than continuity.

7. Archive vs. Oral Tradition

Colonial historiography privileged written archives over oral memory systems. Yet oral epics, ballads, and regional folklore preserved narratives of coexistence and shared heritage. The asymmetry between archived documentation and lived memory marginalized subaltern voices. For instance, folk traditions in Rajasthan and Bengal recount cross-cultural alliances absent from official chronicles. This hierarchy of evidence shaped dominant historiography, privileging elite documentation over vernacular memory.

8. Educational Institutionalization of Myth

Content analysis of selected secondary-level textbooks from the late twentieth century indicates that more than half of medieval history chapters foregrounded political conflict narratives. Cultural exchange, trade networks, and artistic synthesis received comparatively limited attention. Such curricular imbalance institutionalized simplified historical interpretations. The repetition of conflict-centered narratives across generations normalized mythic binaries within public consciousness.

9. Media and Memory Politics

Contemporary media ecosystems amplify selective historical events through repetition and visual dramatization. Digital platforms circulate decontextualized historical episodes, often detached from scholarly consensus. Studies on media representation indicate disproportionate focus on conflict-based narratives in televised historical programming. The mediatization of memory reinforces mythic simplifications, shaping collective perception beyond academic discourse.

10. Literature as Counter-Archive

Despite institutional myth-making, literature has also functioned as a counter-archive preserving plural histories. Contemporary historical fiction and critical scholarship revisit marginalized voices and challenge hegemonic narratives. By reinterpreting archival silences, writers restore erased memories into public discourse. Such literary interventions demonstrate that narrative space remains contested. Through critical engagement, literature becomes a site for historiographical correction and sociological reflection.

Findings

The study establishes that many dominant cultural narratives in South Asia are products of colonial and nationalist historiographical interventions. Statistical enumeration and textbook standardization significantly shaped public memory. Literature has functioned both as a vehicle of myth propagation and as a corrective archive. Syncretic traditions were systematically underrepresented in institutional histories. Identity politics relies heavily on selective remembrance. Historical consciousness is therefore not static but continually reconstructed.

Suggestions

Historiography must integrate interdisciplinary approaches combining sociology, literary studies, and archival research. Educational curricula should incorporate plural narratives supported by empirical scholarship. Greater emphasis on oral traditions and regional histories is necessary. Scholars should challenge reductive periodization models. Academic publishing must prioritize critical historiography over ideological narratives. Public history initiatives should disseminate research findings widely. Collaborative international research can contextualize South Asian narratives globally. Archival accessibility must be expanded. Media literacy programs should address historical misinformation. Finally, historiographical training should foreground reflexivity and methodological rigor.

Conclusion

This study reaffirms that cultural myths in South Asian literature are neither accidental nor purely imaginative; they are historically produced through institutional mechanisms of power and knowledge. Colonial census operations, periodization models, and print capitalism reshaped collective memory, transforming diverse histories into simplified binaries. Nationalist reinterpretations further entrenched these constructions. Yet literary texts also preserve suppressed voices and plural traditions. The sociological lens of collective memory reveals that remembrance and forgetting are political acts. By reassessing historiography, this paper demonstrates that erasures of shared cultural pasts were deliberate and systemic. Restoring these marginalized narratives requires methodological vigilance and interdisciplinary engagement. Ultimately, literature must be read as an archive of contested memory rather than a passive reflection of the past. Recognizing this complexity enables a more nuanced understanding of identity, culture, and historical truth in South Asia.

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Radha, Krishna, and Rukmini : "A Study of Divine Love and Spiritual Symbolism"

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Abstraction :

The romantic narratives of Lord Krishna with Radha and Rukmini are among the most significant and symbolically rich episodes in Indian mythology. These narratives are often misunderstood as forming a romantic rivalry; however, their true importance lies not in rivalry but in the profound spiritual and philosophical symbolism they convey. This research paper aims to examine key events in the life of Lord Krishna—such as the Raas Lila of Radha and Krishna, the separation of Radha and Krishna, and the marriage of Krishna and Rukmini—and to interpret the sacred triadic relationship that emerges from these events

Raas Lila symbolizes divine love and spiritual union, in which Radha embodies the ultimate form of devotion and surrender to Krishna. The separation between Radha and Krishna exemplifies the idea of Viraha, or love in separation, which is a strong form of Bhakti in Indian philosophy. The separation between Radha and Krishna strengthens Radha's devotion and turns love into a spiritual experience instead of a material one. The union between Krishna and Rukmini, on the other hand, symbolizes the accepted and righteous form of loving and devoted married life.

Thus, the paper describes that Radha symbolizes pure spiritual and unconditional love, whereas Rukmini symbolizes committed marital love based on dharma. Krishna, as the divine character, accepts both types of love equally, signifying the harmony and inclusiveness of the divine. The paper concludes that the love triangle of Radha, Krishna, and Rukmini holds important lessons of selfless love, surrender, faith, tolerance, and spiritual oneness, making it an evergreen and applicable topic even in contemporary society.

Keywords : *Radha-Krishna, Rukmini, Raas Lila, Separation (Viraha), Bhakti, Divine Love, Spiri tual Symbolism.*

Introduction :

In Indian mythology, love is not just about physical attraction or emotional bonding; it is intricately linked with spirituality and devotion. Love is considered to be a journey that binds the individual soul (Jivatma) with the Supreme Soul (Paramatma). The love life of Lord Krishna with Radha and Rukmini is one of the strongest examples of the spiritual aspect of love. These have been commonly misinterpreted as a love triangle based on human emotions like jealousy or competition. But on a deeper analysis, they symbolize different aspects of love and devotion.

Radha represents unadulterated, selfless, and unconditional spiritual love. Her love for Krishna is not restricted by social norms and marriage, but by the unconditional surrender of the soul. Rukmini, on the other hand, represents the devoted love of a wife based on faith, duty, and righteousness. Her love for Krishna represents disciplined devotion in the context of social and moral obligations. Krishna, as the divine character, receives both types of love with equal fervor, thereby emphasizing that devotion is not restricted to one type.

The paper will concentrate on the major life events like Raas Lila of Radha and Krishna, their separation, marriage of Krishna and Rukmini, and the love triangle that emerges out of it. The paper will try to understand the spiritual significance of the relationship between Radha, Krishna, and Rukmini through these events.

Radha and Krishna Raas Lila :

Raas Lila is one of the most significant and richest events in the love saga of Radha and Krishna. This event occurred in Vrindavan, where Krishna had invited Radha and the Gopis to join him in a divine dance. Though Krishna was dancing with all the Gopis, Radha was the most special one to him and always remained spiritually closest to him. The divine dance represents the union of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul. The Raas Lila also teaches that true love is spiritual and not physical. Moreover, it also teaches that the divine love is not bound by time, space, and social norms. Through the Raas Lila, Krishna also teaches that God is equally concerned with every devotee who loves him with their heart, while still having a special relationship with pure devotion, which is represented by Radha.

Radha and Krishna First Meet :

The first encounter between Radha and Krishna is known to be a holy and significant event in Indian mythology. As per the popular myths, Radha first met Krishna in Vrindavan during his childhood days. Krishna was playing his flute near the bank of the Yamuna River, and Radha was drawn towards him by the divine music of the flute. As soon as Radha reached Krishna, a deep spiritual bond was established between them. There was no dialogue or material attraction between them but a deep emotional

and spiritual insight. This event represents the natural affinity between the soul and the Supreme Soul. Radha symbolizes devotion, and Krishna symbolizes divine consciousness. The first encounter between the two signifies the start of a spiritual love that transcends social norms and earthly relationships. It illustrates that spiritual love is not of this world and is instead driven by fate and the will of the divine.

Separation of Radha and Krishna :

The separation of Radha and Krishna occurred when Krishna left Vrindavan to go to Mathura to accomplish his divine duty. This incident is a turning point in the love story of Radha and Krishna and brought immense emotional pain to Radha. But Radha did not exhi bit anger, complaint, or resentment. Rather, she tolerated the separation with patience and unflinching devotion. This stage of love is called Viraha or love in separation and has a very important place in Bhakti philosophy. According to this The philosophy of separation heightens the devotion and turns the emotional attachment into spiritual surrender. The love of Radha became cleaner, deeper, and utterly selfless, as it did not have to rely on the bodily presence of Krishna. The constant remembrance of Krishna by Radha symbolizes the soul's desire to meet the divine. This episode teaches us that real love is not confined to bodily proximity but to spiritual understanding.

Krishna and Rukmini Marriage :

Rukmini, the princess of Vidarbha, heard about the divine qualities, bravery, and kindness of Lord Krishna from the descriptions given by sages and travelers. Without seeing him, she developed strong faith and devotion in Krishna and chose him as her life partner. When her parents decided to marry her to Shishupala against her will, Rukmini took the initiative to write a letter to Krishna, asking for his help and support complete trust in him. Krishna answered her call and saved her on the day of her wedding. He then married Rukmini in the traditional Vedic way, thus giving their relationship social and religious sanction. This marriage represents righteous and lawful love that is based on faith, duty, and devotion. Rukmini became the queen and life partner of Krishna, representing the ideal form of marital love based on dharma and complete trust.

Rukmini's Jealousy :

Rukmini is also portrayed as having slight feelings of jealousy towards Krishna's intense spiritual relationship with Radha, but her emotions are never negative or possessive. As the wife of Krishna, Rukmini loved him dearly and longed for his undivided attention, which is only to be expected in any human relationship. But Rukmini's jealousy was born out of love and emotional sensitivity, and not out of any ill will or rivalry. Rukmini soon realized the divine nature of Krishna's relationship with Radha and accepted it with maturity and devotion.

Radha Krishna And Rukmini :

Radha, Krishna, and Rukmini is distinct because it does not revolve around jealousy, rivalry, and emotional turmoil, unlike the usual human love triangle. Instead, it symbolizes different yet equally significant expressions of love and devotion. Radha symbolizes spiritual and emotional love that is selfless, unconditional, and beyond the boundaries of society. Her love for Krishna is at the spiritual level and symbolizes deep emotional devotion. Rukmini, on the other hand, symbolizes devoted and marital love that is grounded in faith, duty, and dharma. As the wife of Krishna, she manifests her love in terms of loyalty, service, and righteous living. Krishna, as the divine character, accepts both types of love with equal compassion and reverence, emphasizing that genuine devotion is more significant than societal status. Radha is Krishna's spiritual life companion, while Rukmini is his worldly life partner. This distinct love triangle emphasizes that love can coexist in different forms without any conflict.

Radha And Rukmini Conversation

Go and meet Radha," said Rukmini,
"What have you done to my Krishna, Radha?
If Kanhaiya is mine,
Then why does the world still call him Radhe–Krishna?" "You became the wife of Krishna," she says, "But you could never become his beloved.
If Radha is only an obstacle in Krishna's love, Then why is Radha still the symbol of love itself?" "I do not say that I received no love,"
Says Rukmini,
"Krishna is with me, yet the flute is not. When Krishna came to Rukmini's home, Radha watched silently.
When Rukmini danced,
Radha spoke within herself." "You speak as if I am the queen," Rukmini says,
"But people remember us as a story.
I have been mad with love Since the moment I was with him.
Tell me, as a lover, what did I truly gain?
You took Krishna,
And I was left as a shadow." "You never heard the music of the flute, Yet you claim to have heard everything.
Who became Krishna's flute, Who shaped his melody?"
When a lover cannot give himself fully, He does not stop the mountain, He lets time change its path.
And when my name alone makes you cry, What complaint do you have against me?
You gained Krishna, And I lost him."Go and meet Radha," said Rukmini,
"What have you done to my Krishna, Radha?
If Kanhaiya is mine,
Then why does the world still call him Radhe–Krishna?" "You became the wife of Krishna," she says, "But you could never become his beloved.
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And I was left as a shadow." "You never heard the music of the flute,
Yet you claim to have heard everything.

Who became Krishna's flute, Who shaped his melody?"
When a lover cannot give himself fully, He does not stop the mountain,
He lets time change its path.
And when my name alone makes you cry, What complaint do you have against me?
You gained Krishna, And I lost him."

Speritual And Philosophical Interpretation :

Philosophically, Radha symbolizes the Jivatma or the individual soul, whose greatest desire is to merge with the Paramatma, symbolized by Krishna. Radha's passionate love, devotion, and suffering of separation symbolize the spiritual journey of the soul towards union with God. Krishna, symbolizing the Paramatma, is the supreme consciousness that accepts devotion unconditionally and without limitations. Rukmini symbolizes the devotion that is practiced through righteous living, or Dharma, where the love for God is expressed through one's sense of duty, faith, and morality. The incidents from the lives of Radha, Krishna, and Rukmini illustrate that there are various ways of attaining God, and all kinds of devotion are equally accepted.

Cultural And Social Significance :

The legends of Radha, Krishna, and Rukmini have had a great impact on Indian culture and society for many centuries. The love stories of these characters are also depicted in the classical dance forms of Kathak and Odissi, in which the emotions of devotion, separation, and love for God are depicted in a beautiful manner. The devotional songs and poems based on these legends are still used as guidelines for spiritual and religious activities. The love story is also depicted in Indian paintings, folk dramas, sculptures in temples, and festivals. Apart from art, the love story also teaches valuable social lessons of patience, faith, sacrifice, tolerance, and harmony.

Research Methodology :

This study is grounded in a qualitative analytical method to decipher the spiritual and philosophical undertones of the Radha-Krishna-Rukmini love triangle. This study is mainly based on the analysis of mythological texts and Bhakti literature, including religious texts, poems, and spiritual writings on Lord Krishna. Secondary sources such as books, research papers, journal articles, and interpretations have also been used to substantiate this study. These sources assist in investigating the pivotal events in their lives, symbolic interpretations, and cultural perspectives. The qualitative method enables a better understanding of devotion, love, and spirituality than numerical analysis.

Conclusion :

The love triangle of Radha, Krishna, and Rukmini is not a tale of competition and conflict, but a profound teaching of divine love and spiritual insight. The Raas Lila represents the profound spiritual oneness of the soul and God, while the separation of Radha and Krishna symbolizes deep devotion and surrender. The union of Krishna and Rukmini symbolizes righteous and socially accepted love in the form of duty and devotion. Thus, the various incidents of their lives depict that love, when unselfish, genuine, and devoted, is a great means to attain spiritual awakening. The love triangle of Radha, Krishna, and Rukmini is still a source of inspiration for faith, unity, and devotion in today's world.

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Whose Truth Counts? Rethinking stories of Itihasa- Purana through Indian and Western Conceptions of Truth

Varsha Gupta

Abstract:

Retellings the stories of Itihasa- Purana traditions have emerged as a dominant trend in contemporary Indian literature and scholarship. These retellings are not merely creative engagements but sites of epistemological conflict, where Western notions of truth- rooted in history, factuality, and empirical verification- intersect with Indian traditions that conceive truth as experiential, pluralistic, and transformative. This paper examines how debates surrounding the historicity, fictionality, and symbolic value of Itihasa- Puraṇa arise from a deeper clash between Western and Indian conceptions of truth. By tracing Western ideas of truth from classical Greek philosophy through Christianity, Enlightenment rationalism, and postmodern critiques, and juxtaposing them with Indian notions of satya, rta, dharma, and pramaṇa, the paper argues that Indian narrative traditions cannot be adequately understood through the binary of myth and history. Instead, Itihasa–Puraṇa operates as a truth-bearing narrative form whose validity lies not in factual correspondence but in ethical orientation, experiential disclosure, and cultural continuity. The paper concludes by suggesting that a genuine dialogue between these traditions requires epistemic pluralism rather than the imposition of a singular framework of truth.

Keywords: *Itihasa- Purana, truth, satya, dharma, narrative, historiography, Western epistemology, Indian philosophy*

Retelling the stories of our Itihasa- Purana tradition is always an activity of great fascination for the people of the whole pan-Indian subcontinent. Moreover, among contemporary writers also, it has emerged as an area of great interest. Contemporary writers irrespective of their domains are attempting to write around these stories and use these stories for their understanding of modern concepts. Historians are trying to establish these stories as historical stories, or historical pasts, or a past of a different kind. Anthropologists want to study these traditions as customs or beliefs carrying some data or information. People belonging to the Literature field are more interested in locating the theories of their ideological concerns in the recasting of the characters of these stories.

We can observe clearly from the expressions of discussions, criticisms and applaud, that it is not only the storytellers who are interested in these retellings, but the audience is also equally interested as these stories are something which is the part of our lives since our birth. There is a wave of creators and consumers dipping into the rich well of these traditional stories that never seem to run dry.

Since these stories of Itihasa-Purana traditions have gained the attentionship of both the academic community and the general readership in India, they are now being studied, revisited, and analyzed through theoretical interpretations within literature departments in both Western and Indian Universities. A brief glance at the scholarly debates surrounding these stories of Itihasa-Purana reveals distinct threads of discussion.

The early Orientalists of British India were in agreement that India lacked a history in terms of written records. This consensus, although with some variations, was highly influential among experts for a significant period. However, the emergence of the "colonial knowledge" paradigm, linking European rule with European understanding of India, gradually undermined this consensus. This shift led to a reevaluation of Orientalist knowledge, making it more accessible for historical analysis. Consequently, in recent years, there has been a surge of new research challenging the old consensus and suggesting that India indeed had a history, albeit of a different nature. Scholars are now tasked with unraveling the specifics of this historical narrative.

Romila Thapar argued, in one of the conferences in 1956, that “in Ancient India, records were maintained and references were made to past events that were believed to have happened. Subsequently,

emerges the question of the historicity of these records and events. The past is crucial to the present, as it is known to us that it helps to create a sense of identity in society and legitimize one's status".

Scholars observe that one might expect to find a historical sense among Hindus not in their religious literature, but rather in the records of the rulers who shaped history in India and beyond. Hinduism, unlike secular Western culture, does not place the same emphasis on history, making the custodians of religious texts less likely to provide insights into the past. The presence or absence of historical or geographical awareness among the Hindus can be ascertained through a thorough analysis of the inscriptions available to us.

Fiction, Myth and Question of Truth

Another group of scholars argued that these stories of Itihasa are 'fictional creations' (Roy, a folklorist) and 'there is no need to attach any divinity to it'(Sitra). What intrigued me more are the arguments that asserts these stories hold significant mythological values but there is an element of truth in them (Sen). These stories contain elements of originality and wisdom that deserve preservation (Naganath); these tales are myths with underlying truths (Pattnaik). These deliberations show that the fictional form is being discussed in academic circles as a path to understand the truth of these stories of Itihasa. What unites these positions is the assumption that fiction and truth are separable categories, and that truth must ultimately be justified by correspondence to reality. Even when scholars acknowledge symbolic or moral truth, they often frame it as secondary to historical or factual truth.

The discussions do not stop at this point but also takes interest in articulating the goals and purpose of these stories of Itihasa. It implies that these debates have generated a series of expectations from these stories. It has been expressed quite often that these stories offer valuable lessons (Sriansh), they are eternal symbols of virtue that exist beyond the limitations of time and space (Sadguru) and hold a wealth of knowledge and insights that can greatly benefit human beings (Basham). Yet such expectations themselves arise from a particular conception of truth—one that presumes that narratives must mean something in a propositional or didactic sense.

This paper argues that these debates cannot be resolved without examining the underlying epistemological assumptions about truth itself.

Truth is not a universal constant; it is a cultural construction shaped by metaphysical commitments, onto- epistemological frameworks, and linguistic forms. In the Western tradition, truth has often been aligned with correspondence to external reality, anchored in logic, science, and empirical verification. In contrast, Indian traditions offer a more experiential view of truth, where the idea of satya emerges not from objective verification but from alignment with dhārma, cosmic order (ṛta), and spiritual realisation.

The very act of comparing these conceptions becomes urgent in the context of contemporary Indian literature – particularly the retelling of stories of Puranas, where Western notions of historical truth often misread or flatten rich symbolic traditions. The discomfort arises when these stories, which aim to disclose truth rather than describe it, are forced into genres such as the historical novel or the biographical epic, genres born of Western epistemology.

Western Notions of Truth – From Plato to Foucault

In the Western tradition, the conception of truth begins with the Greek word "alētheia", which means unconcealedness or that which is not hidden. For Plato, truth was eternal, abstract, and accessible only to reason. The world of sensory experience, in his view, was deceptive, a shadow of the higher reality – the realm of Forms (eidē). In The Republic, Plato famously declares through the Allegory of the Cave that most people live in ignorance, mistaking shadows for the real. Only the philosopher, through dialectic and reason, can access the true reality: "The truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images" (Plato 240).

Plato's theory of truth is metaphysical: truth exists independently of perception, as a perfect Form. This positions the Western idea of truth as transcendent, objective, and separable from narrative or lived experience.

Aristotle shifted this metaphysical abstraction toward a more empirical formulation. In Metaphysics, he defined truth in terms of correspondence: "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true" (Aristotle 1011b25).

This statement has become foundational for the Western correspondence theory of truth. Truth here is linguistic and logical – a proposition is true if it corresponds to facts. It is a theory of representation, where language mirrors reality. This idea anticipates modern science and historical method. It separates the act of narration from the truth of what is narrated, paving the way for objective historiography.

The early Christian tradition reoriented truth from philosophical speculation to divine revelation. Christ himself becomes the embodiment of truth: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (New International Version, John 14:6). Saint Augustine, a towering figure in Christian theology, fused Platonic thought with Christian doctrine. For him, truth resides in the divine Logos, and human beings can only access it through grace and faith.

Truth is in the inner man: I entered even into my inward self… and I saw the Light that never changes, above my mind, not the light of every day, but another, utterly different. (Confessions VII.10)

This truth is not empirical or verifiable. It is absolute, personal, and salvific. This model profoundly shaped the Western theological tradition and laid the foundation for a bifurcation between sacred truth (revelation) and secular knowledge (reason), which would be inherited and eventually contested by the Enlightenment.

With the dawn of modernity, René Descartes grounded truth in the certainty of the thinking subject. In Meditations on First Philosophy, Descartes declares, "Cogito, ergo sum"—I think, therefore I am (Descartes 17). Here, truth is no longer divine but is self-evident, beginning from the indubitable clarity of one's own consciousness.

This Cartesian epistemology laid the foundation for modern science, rationalism, and a subject-object divide. Truth becomes internal to the subject but must be verified by logical reasoning or sensory evidence. From Descartes onwards, the West becomes increasingly preoccupied with how we know what is true – a question that sharply diverges from the Indian emphasis on becoming one with what is true.

Immanuel Kant further refined this model by distinguishing between the noumenon (thing-in-itself) and the phenomenon (thing-as-experienced). In Critique of Pure Reason, he famously argues, "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" (Kant 93).

Truth for Kant is shaped by the categories of the human mind. We cannot access the thing-in-itself, only its appearance as structured by our perception and understanding. This epistemological humility limits truth to the phenomenal realm – an idea far from the Indian conception where the phenomenal (vyavahārika) and ultimate (pāramārthika) realities are part of a continuum.

Michel Foucault revolutionised Western thought by proposing that truth is not eternal or even universal but historically contingent and constructed through power. In Discipline and Punish, he argues that "Truth is not by nature free—nor error servile—but that its production is thoroughly embedded in political systems" (Foucault 133).

Foucault identifies regimes of truth – discursive formations that determine what counts as true in a given society. Thus, historical, medical, or legal truths are not merely discovered but enforced. This aligns unexpectedly with Indian views that recognise multiple valid truths (anekānta) and pramāṇas (means of knowledge).

Indian Notions of Truth (Satya) – Dhārma, Ṛta, and Non-Dual Realization

While Western traditions often associate truth with factual correspondence or logical certainty, Indian traditions treat truth as a mode of being, a state of alignment, and ultimately as a realisation. The Sanskrit term "satya" is etymologically rooted in "sat" (that which is), suggesting that truth is not merely spoken or known but lived. In the Indian world, to be true is not simply to be correct; it is to be in harmony with the deeper order of things – ṛta, dhārma, and ultimately Brahman.

In the earliest Vedic texts, truth is closely aligned with ṛta – a principle of cosmic order, moral law, and harmonious functioning. Ṛta is not a static truth but an emergent, living principle by which the universe

operates. The Ṛgveda indicates that Ritam and Satyam first arose from tapas (fervour/heat) and that the night (ratri) and the ocean were established after these. Ritam is the symbol of dynamic orderliness. It is the principle of cosmic harmony. It is the natural law underlying all that moves and moves not (Ṛgveda 10.190.1).

Ṛta governs not only the natural cycles of the cosmos but also human behaviour, ritual, and speech. To act or speak truthfully was to align oneself with ṛta. This view renders truth an ontological orientation rather than a semantic correspondence.

Similarly, the Ṛgveda states that Satyam upholds the earth "satyenottabhitā bhūmiḥ" while the Adityas stand secure because of the Ritam (Ṛgveda 10.85.1).

Unlike Western notions of objective factuality, ṛta is not separable from value or practice. In fact, it anticipates a worldview in which ontology (what is), ethics (what should be), and soteriology (what saves) are interwoven. In the Vedic religion, Ṛitam is the principle of natural order which regulates and coordinates the operation of the universe and everything within it. Satyam is truth, and Ritam is the law that governs the working of that truth.

As Vedic religion evolved into the Upaniṣadic tradition, ṛta became internalised and rearticulated as satya – truth not just as outer alignment but as inner realisation. In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, the sage Yājñavalkya suggests that he who speaks truth is in accord with dhārma, and dhārma is in accord with satya (1.4.14).

Satya is not truth in the logical or empirical sense, but in the existential and spiritual sense. It is that which endures, that which is real beneath illusion (māyā). According to the Taittiriya Upaniṣad, "Satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma" – Truth, knowledge, and infinity are Brahman (Taittiriya Upaniṣad 2.1.1).

Truth, therefore, is the real – that which is (sat) – and to know truth is to know Brahman, the ultimate reality. This shifts truth from the discursive to the contemplative.

In Indian thought, especially in the epics and dhārmaśāstra traditions, truth is inseparable from dhārma- the principle of right action. Dhārma is contextual, relational, and fluid; so too is truth. In the Mahābhārata, Yudhiṣṭhira famously tells a partial lie to defeat Droṇa in war, raising the ethical dilemma of whether speaking factually but causing harm is true.

"Ashvatthāmā is dead," he [Yudhiṣṭhira] says, adding under his breath, "the elephant," thereby technically speaking the truth but misleading Droṇa. This act, sanctioned by Kṛṣṇa, underscores a key Indian insight: satya divorced from dhārma is falsehood.

As Wendy Doniger notes, "In the Mahābhārata, dhārma is often not a single duty but a choice among conflicting duties… truth is tested not in isolation but in the furnace of action" (Doniger 236).

Thus, Indian traditions emphasise contextual integrity over absolute propositions. What is true must also be wise, timely, and beneficial – a view that differs radically from the rigid propositional logic of the West.

Perhaps the most profound departure from Western frameworks is found in Advaita Vedānta, which distinguishes between vyāvahārika satya (conventional truth), prātibhāsika satya (illusory truth), and pāramārthika satya (adhyatmic or ultimate real truth). According to Śaṅkara, the world of duality is ultimately māyā, and only the non-dual Brahman is real. The real does not exist, and what exists is not real.

"Brahma satyaṃ jagat mithyā"—Brahman is the real; the world is illusion (Śaṅkara, Vivekacūḍāmaṇi 20). This does not mean the empirical world is false in a nihilistic sense; it means it is provisionally real, useful within the domain of action but not ultimately abiding. This multi-tiered view allows for simultaneous truths across levels – something nearly alien to binary Western systems.

S. N. Balagangadhara explains this difference. The Indian traditions are not relativistic; they are pluralistic. Indian traditions recognise two distinct levels of truth: laukika (worldly) truth and paramārthika (ultimate or spiritual) truth. Laukika truth refers to statements that accurately describe entities and phenomena in the empirical world. In many respects, this aligns with what is known in Western philosophy as the philosophical or Aristotelian conception of truth – that is, truth as correspondence to reality. It also accommodates what is known as the pragmatic conception, where truth is judged by its practical effects or

usefulness. Whether Indian thought also embraces something akin to a syntactic conception of truth (truth based on formal structure or coherence within a system) remains uncertain. Nonetheless, both the semantic (truth as meaning correspondence) and pragmatic conceptions are encompassed within the laukika domain. Crucially, laukika truth always pertains to entities that exist in the world – whether these are objects, events, conditions, or other observable realities. (10)

Pramāṇa and Narrative Truth

Indian philosophy developed sophisticated epistemological systems (pramāṇa) to account for different modes of knowing. Perception, inference, testimony, comparison, postulation, and non-cognition are all recognised as valid means of knowledge, each suited to particular domains.

Crucially, śabda pramāṇa (verbal or scriptural testimony) is not considered inferior to perception or inference. This epistemic inclusivity allows narrative, poetry, and scripture to function as legitimate vehicles of truth.

Within this framework, kāvya, Itihasa, and Purana are not fictional in the Western sense. They are truth-bearing narratives whose validity lies in their transformative capacity. Their purpose is not to represent events accurately but to orient individuals toward dhārma, evoke ethical reflection, and cultivate spiritual insight.

Colonial Misreadings and Contemporary Retellings

Colonial scholarship systematically reclassified Indian narratives using Western categories such as myth, and superstition, thereby stripping them of epistemic authority. The absence of chronology was equated with the absence of history, and narrative plurality was mistaken for irrationality.

These classifications continue to shape contemporary debates, particularly in discussions about the historicity of epic narratives. Questions about whether these stories are "really true" often presuppose a Western framework in which truth must be either factual or fictional.

Contemporary retellings frequently reproduce this tension by recasting Itihasa–Purana as historical novels, psychological biographies, or ideological allegories. In doing so, they risk flattening the multi-layered truth structures of these traditions.

The debates surrounding the truth of Itihasa–Purana are not merely literary or historical disputes; they are epistemological confrontations between distinct cultural conceptions of truth. Western traditions, shaped by philosophy, theology, and science, prioritise propositional clarity, empirical verification, and representational accuracy. Indian traditions, by contrast, conceive truth as alignment with cosmic order, ethical responsibility, and experiential realisation.

To ask whether Itihasa–Purana is history or myth is to impose a foreign binary on a tradition that operates outside it. These narratives are truthful not because they can be proven but because they continue to guide action, shape identity, and disclose meaning.

A meaningful dialogue between these traditions requires epistemic pluralism—the recognition that different cultures may produce different kinds of truth. Rather than flattening these differences, scholarship must learn to preserve them. Only then can Itihasa–Purana be understood not as a failed history or embellished fiction, but as a distinct narrative form that embodies a living conception of truth.

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Cultural Narrative: Myths and Truths in Societal Context

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Abstract:

The present research paper strives to explore the myths as cultural narratives which impact the social norm, cultural identity, moral and ethical codes and legitimization of power in social structure. Myth is traditional story written in past, explains cultural beliefs or human experiences and involves supernatural beings or heroes. The present paper explores the origin, meaning and object of Myths. They explain how society's customs, institutions and taboos were established and sanctified. They are past narratives which pass down cultural values, morals and histories to new generations, ensuring continuity and stability. It is believed that myth is not only an imaginative thing but a symbolic method for understanding the heart of a culture. Myths play significant role in socio-cultural phenomena. It influences the entire socio-cultural landscapes. Myths also influence art including literature, painting, music, dance, sculpture etc. All these things reflect the culture of a society.

The present research paper is a humble effort to explore how myths play an important role of the cultural narrative. The paper strives to explore the truths in societal context while interpreting and reinterpreting the myths. As myths are the traditional past stories, emerged in past, were considered true from the cultural point of view. Moreover, Myths impact social norms and behaviours and also legitimize the power in social structure. While reinterpreting myths truths come forward. Patriarchy and class dominancy established through the mythical approach. The present paper strives to explore the truth or reality behind myths in Indian Hindu social context.

Key Words: Myths, mythology, culture, society, community, tradition, religious, narrative, interpreting, reinterpreting, beliefs, norms etc.

The term 'Myth' derives from the ancient Greek word "*Mythos*" meaning "speech", "narrative", "story", "tale" or "fiction". Plato also used the word "*mythologia"* as a general term for fiction or story-telling. English adopted the word *mythology* in the 15th century, initially meaning 'the exposition of a myth or myths'. Myth as a traditional narrative, explains the world, human nature or natural phenomena through symbolic stories. These stories generally refer with the divine and supernatural elements. However, these stories are fictitious rather than factual. Myth plays a vital role in society for forming social norms. It is a traditional story that explains cultural beliefs or human experiences, typically involving supernatural beings or heroes. It is a fictitious past story and not a legend. A legend has historical base while myth has not. People believe these stories however these stories are historically not true. Usually the characters in Myths are non-human, such as gods, demigods, and other supernatural figures. Even humans, animals or combinations also occur in some myths. Myth may be considered as natural or supernatural in character. Many human communities consider myth to be factual account of their remote past. The roots of some myths may be true but some remain total imaginative. It has cultural meaning rather than historical. Myths bear the features like traditional stories, gods and heroes, explanations of natural phenomena, origin of the universe and also cultural values. They are not true historically, but they are supposed as true and sacred. They explain how society's customs, institutions and taboos were established and sanctified. From the point of view of cultural context these stories are believed as true because these stories have deeper cultural references. They have deep cultural belief which explain origine, values and the human condition. They are also understood as stories that convey deeper truths about human nature and existence.

Myths play significant role in socio-cultural phenomena. They influence societal norms and beliefs. They influence moral values and public attitude also. "A myth expresses and confirms society's religious values and norms, it provides a pattern of behaviour to be imitated, testifies to the efficacy of ritual with its practical ends and establishes the sanctity of cult." (Wikipedia- Myth) The entire socio-cultural landscape remains under the influence of Myths in society. The regional tradition and culture as well as arts including literature, painting, music, dance, sculpture etc. remain under the influence of Myths. Myths are past narratives which pass down cultural values, morals and histories to new generations, ensuring continuity and stability. It is also believed that myth is not only an imaginative thing but a symbolic method for understanding the heart of a culture. According to Robers Graves "Religious traditional stories are "Myths". All myths are religious (or "sacred") but not all religions stories are myths. Myths might have stories only and not the religious concepts. While considering myth as traditional story it needs to be understood its impact on social phenomena. Because, Myth has social function. It provides morals, social norms and legitimizes power in social structure. All the religions and cultures have their own myths. While considering Indian scenario we come across different cultures identified with different religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism etc.

While considering Indian context we observe that Indian culture is mixed culture. It includes various ideologies and schools of thoughts which later on recognized with religious identity like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism etc. It is the fact that every community has their own set of religious beliefs, principles and rituals. It is deeply rooted in the psyche of the members of the community and they try to transform it in reality. It means Myth plays a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage and strengthening the community connection. Roland Barthes, a renowned French philosopher considers myth as a cultural narrative that imparts ideological message. In his work "Mythologies" (1957) he reveals that "Myth is a type of speech that is not defined by its object or purpose, but by the way it is uttered."(Barthes. 109). Even Campbell in his work "The Hero with a Thousand Faces", states that "The Myth is a story that is told and retold and in the retelling it is transformed." (Campbell)

Myth plays crucial role in cultural continuity from generations to generations. Myth serves to connect with history and cultural roots, which help to shape community and regional identity. The cultural narrative encompasses myths, legends and folklore. These things serve as fundamental operating system for society for shaping identities, values and behaviours. The cultural narratives are the symbolic representations of a culture's worldview. They help for interpreting reality through the ancestral wisdom, moral codes and social structures. The role of myths in society is remarkable for creating social cohesion and identity. Myths also serve for moral and ethical guidance, and play an important role in legitimising power in social structure. They also play an important role in shaping values, norms and beliefs that shape various religions and cultures around the world. They have psychological function which helps individuals to think existential questions.

The interpretations of the myths are related with the community where the myths are emerged. They are interpreted in cultural context. The interpretations are relative to the community where it emerged. It is originated for the purpose of that community. The myths serve as symbolic narrative. Cultural myths provide the foundational belief of culture. These myths serve to preserve cultural identity and own values which are transformed from one generation to the next. Myths have influence over art, literature, religion, spirituality, social norms and values. Hence, it is necessary to interpret myths from cultural and social point of view.

Myth is an important component in religious practice also. Even, it is the part of religion. It is said that "Myths does not stand by itself but is tied to rituals." (Wikipedia- "Myths and rituals".) In the world today we come across that the Rituals are the purposes of myths. "Every myth is derived from a particular ritual and that the syntagmatic quality of myth is a reproduction of the succession of ritual act." (Wikipedia- "Myths and Rituals".) Myths emerge from rituals during the natural process of religious evolution. Hence, cultural myths refer with religious matters.

Even though the myths provide explanations for the universe, the origin of humanity and the natural world they can validate social order and authority by enforcing societal norms. They form collective belief.

They support social order and religious cosmology also. Renowned anthropologist Malinowski defines Mythology as "A codification of belief, which acted as a character for ritual, justifying rites, ceremonies and social and amoral rules." (Henry 2006 p. 123)

The roots of myths which are related with classical Hinduism come from the ancient Vedic religion. The characters, theology, philosophy and stories make up ancient Vedic myths which are linked with Hindu beliefs. In Hindu mythological paradigm, it is believed that the social norms and moral beliefs are formed through the ancient stories like myths. The ancient tales or teachings from various Hindu scriptures remained the backbone of the Hindu ideology of social structure and social behaviour. The stories or teachings from Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Smritis, Dharmasutra, Shruties and epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana play crucial role in shaping the Hindu social norms and social structure. Hindu myths serve the features like establishing social order and customs, creating group identity, reinforcing social structure, psychological and emotional support and intergenerational transmission. It is considered that Myths in Hinduism act as sacred stories that define the world order and provide moral framework for society. It has set the norms for social interaction and for maintaining communal cohesion.

Indian social structure is deeply influenced by ancient myths, primarily the Vedic *Purush Sukta.* It justifies the hierarchical *Varna* system. It is proved that myths play an important role in legitimising power in social structure. The Hindu social structure has mythological push through which social structure of hierarchy established. *Varna* and caste system established through the myths. The *Purush Sukta* Verse No. 12 in Rugveda claims that social structure is made of four *Varnas* like *Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya* and *Shudras*. The *Varna* system first pronounced in the *Purush Sukta* of the *Rig Veda*. Hence, the roots of the social division go towards *Rig Veda* and specifically in the *Purush Sukta* of *Rig Veda*. This is the establishment of social stratification. According to this myth, in the hierarchical social structure, Brahmins remained at the top and enjoying all the privileges. *Kshatriya* and *Vaishya* enjoy limited privileges while Shudras are kept at the bottom of the society without any privilege but for duties only to serve others. According to *Varna* system, the role of *Brahmin* is of a priest and a teacher. The role of *Kshatriya* is of a ruler and a warrior. The role of *Vaishya* is of trader and merchant. The role of the last *Varna* is of a labourer. The last *Varna* is given minor function. The four *Varnas* were first mentioned in a hymn of the *Rig Veda* as emerging from the self-sacrifice of *Purusha*- the creator, the Primeval Being." (Kumar, Sangeet. 2005. P. 44) According to the *Purush Sukta* of Rig *Veda*, the *Brahmin* was born from the head or mouth, the *Kshatriya* from the arms, the *Vaishya* from the thighs and the *Shudras* from the feet of the creator. Thus, the Hindu society was first divided into four basic *Varnas* namely *Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra*. This division of society remained hierarchical. Hindu social order has been established through this theory of hierarchy. *Varna* system fixes the gradation and function of different Varnas. This social structure preaches a class-composed society as its ideal. This division of society established the social inequality. The division theory of society established *Chaturvarnya.* According to Dr. Ambedkar, "rights and disabilities were not based on general uniform considerations. They were based on communal considerations. All rights for the first three *Varnas* and all disabilities for the *Shudras* was the principle on which the *Brahminic* Law was based." (Moon, Vasant. 1990. p. 61) The Caste system emerged from the *Varna* system. Caste system was based on birth and the occupation. Even the myth of previous life's sin and present life's condition has been disproved in modern world of science. The hierarchical social structure categorizes people based on purity, leading to endogamy and division of labour on which the caste system dwells. The Hindu mythology usually concentrates social hierarchy and supremacy of *Brahmins*.

The epics, Mahabharata and Ramayana serve as the centre of Hindu culture. These epics have been imparting knowledge of morality, duty and righteousness, shaping social norms, moral values and way of living. These epics promote sense of central identity. Mahabharata highlights the true nature of dharma, duty and sacrifice. It has promoted for community bonding. Both the epics impart moral, duty based dharma and righteous social behaviours. This is heavily influenced the Indian culture and traditions. Moreover, myths are reinterpreted. Number of myths are being reinterpreted and challenged through the lens of social justice movement and scientific secular view point. The Indian social structure is deeply rooted in Hindu myths or

mythology. However, the rapid modern change is leading to complex and diverse society. So, even the belief that individual could never change their profession and social status is disproved today.

The myth of Eklavya from Mahabharata speaks of the privileges or righteousness according to *Varna*. The story speaks of a devoted tribal archer, Eklavya, who was denied by Guru Dronacharya. Dronacharya was the royal archery teacher of Arjuna. He denied Eklavya for teaching archery due to the birth of Eklavya in a low caste. Through self-training Eklavya became an exceptional archer. He surpassed Arjun also. Dronacharya got fear of Eklavya's surpassing Arjuna and also disproving his excellence in teaching, demanded Eklavya's right thumb as *Guru dakshana*. Eklavya willingly cut off own thumb. It symbolizes immense respect and sacrifice, though crippling his archery skills. The guru *dakshana*, cutting of right thumb ended his prospects as a master archer. The refusal of Dronacharya to Eklavya highlights the caste-based discrimination prevalent in Indian Hindu society. It was betrayal of Dronacharya with Eklavya. The myth has been written for an establishment of the social inequality which leads to unequal rights. As according to *Chaturvarnya* social system *Brahmins* have all the privileges and *Shudras* have only duties and no privileges.

The myth of Shambhuka in the *Uttarakhand* of the *Valmiki Ramayan* is essentially significant for study. Lord Rama executed Shambhuka, a *Shudra* ascetic for performing forbidden. The premature death of a Brahmin's son is the main cause of the incident. A Brahmin met Rama and claimed that his son died because a Shudra was performing forbidden act of learning knowledge which truly and only was of Brahmins. Rama finds Shambhuka in a forest. After confirming Shambhuka as a *Shudra* doing his *Tapasya* (which was forbidden for *Shudras*) Rama kills Shambhuka for violating his Dharma for not having the right to learn knowledge. It validates the social discrimination of *Varna* and caste structure. The story validates the caste rigidity. The story strictly adheres the caste structure. The beneficiary of the discrimination interpret the act of Rama's killing of Shambhuka as a metaphor for maintaining spiritual order or a warning against dangerous, unauthorized rituals. Hindu social order was constructed though the mythical writings by the Vaidic people. Rigveda originated discrimination while later scriptures justified and advocated it.

The story of Vamana and Mahabali presented in the *Bhagwat Purana* (*Skand* 8) and *Vamana Purana* is significant from social point of view. It is the most important episode in Indian mythology. The story narrates the rise and fall of the *asura* king Bali. Bali's greatness attracted the attention of the gods and led to an extraordinary encounter with Lord Vishnu in his Vaman *avatar*. Vaman visits a generous king Mahabali, who had conquered heaven, and asks for just three paces of land. Vaman then grows to cosmic size, covering the earth and sky in two steps and Bali humbly offers his head for the third step. Vaman placed his foot on Bali's head and sent him in *patal* (netherworld). The myth has raised number of questions. Now the myth is reinterpreted and Bali is granted as the great king of Bahujan. He is deceived and defeated by the so called higher *Varnas* in *Chaturvarnya* social structure. Bali's humbleness is deceived by killing him and is considered that it is good act to preserve righteousness. It is seen now the cultural conflict in India since ancient period. It is nothing but to maintain the superiority of Brahmins in the name of God, according to *Varna* system originated from Rig Veda.

In Indian social perspective the established Petrarchan social system affected the narrative of the society. The myths of Sati Savitri and Sita are important from this point of view. The myth of Sati Savitri, found in Mahabharata, tells that Savitri defies fate to save her husband, Satyavan, from Yama, the god of death. The name Sati Savitri is often used to describe a faithful wife, merging the concept of a "Sati" with the specific mythological figure of Savitri. Her devotion to her husband is portrayed in the story. She is considered as the symbol of loyalty to her husband. The "testimony of Sita" is often debated chapter of the Ramayana (*Uttara Khand*), refers to the final validation of her purity and solid devotion to Rama. She had having already undergone an *Agni Pariksha* (trial by fire) after her rescue from Lanka to satisfy public gossip, Sita faces a second, more test of her integrity. In her testimony she declares that if she has never thought of any man other than Rama, the earth should open and take her back. The earth splits open, and took her back. This is testifying to her absolute chastity and releasing her from an unjust world. Sita's story is a blend of myth and allegory. She is considered a daughter of the earth, born from a furrow, and her final

return to the earth. Both the myths, of Sati Savitri and the testimony of Sita are often reinterpreted as a critique of patriarchal system that demand women's virtue be constantly proven. On the other hand, men in power are held to different standards. Sita's testimony and her subsequent return to earth, marks her as a figure who finally rejects the scrutiny of society, choosing instead a final, dignified liberation. The stories of Sati Savitri and Sita highlight the male dominated social structure where gender inequality was prevailed in past period. The reinterpretation of the myths from the modern point of view, where democratic principles like liberty and equality prevail lead us to find the reality behind creating such myths. It is even true to other female characters also. Chitra Banarjee Divakaruni and other modern writers have reinterpreted the *Mahabharata "*from the perspective of Draupadi, shifting the focus from patriarchal, war centric narrative to women's experiences and agency."

Thus, the cultural narrative through Myths play an important role in setting or establishing certain social norms. Myths have legitimized the power in social structure. It has been explored through the interpretation and reinterpretation of the myths. Number of myth helped to set or justify the certain social norms in social system. They have social context. While reinterpreting the myths they have been tested through the modern democratic approach and prove the truths in societal context.

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सिसय जइण-पाअग-साहिच्चे अक्खाण-सरुवं एक्क अज्झयणं

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संखेवो

पहुअ-पाअग-जइण-साहिच्चं भारतीय-संकिईए एक्को विपुलो निही अत्थि। एयम्मि संसोधण-लेखे जइण-अक्खाणाणं (मिथाणं) तत्त-मीमंसा कया अत्थि। अज्झयणस्स मुक्ख-पओअणं अक्खाणेसु कम्म-सिद्धंतस्स य अहिंसा-धम्मस्स अण्णेसणं अत्थि। लेखे विमलसूरी-विरइअ 'पउमचरिए' रावणस्स विज्जाहर-सरुवं, भरह-बाहुबली-जुद्धे माणा-विणासो य हरिभद्दसूरी-विरइअ 'समराइच्चकहाए' भव-भमणं विसेस-रूवेण विलेसिअं अत्थि। संसोधणेण एअं सिद्धं जाअं जइ, जइण-मिथाणि केवलं कल्पना-कहाओ णत्थि, परं ताओ माणुस-जीवणे नीइ-मल्लाणं पालिअं करेति।

पाअड-साहिच्चे जइण-धम्मस्स कहाओ अ वित्तांता विसेस-महत्तं धरंति। इमिणा सोह-पत्तेण अम्हेहिं विविह-जइण-आयरिआणं साहिच्चस्स अज्झयणं कअं।

सामिणा एइ भासाए धम्म-उवदेसं दिण्णं। जइण-पाअग-साहिच्चे अक्खाणाणं (मिथाणं) महत्तं अहुति। एए अक्खाणा केवलं कहाओ णत्थि, परं ताणि कम्म-सिद्धांतं, अहिंसा-मग्गं य दंसेति। एयम्मि संसोधण-लेखे जइण-पोराणिअ-कहाणं विविह-भेदाणं अज्झयणं करिज्जइ।

मुक्ख-सद्दा (Keywords): पाअग-साहिच्चं, जइण-अक्खाण, कम्म-विवागो, पउमचरिअ, अहिंसा।

पओअणाई

१. पाअग-साहिच्चस्स परिचयं कारवणं।
२. जइण-अक्खाणेसु नीइ-मल्लाणं अज्झयणं।
३. पोराणिअ-कहाणं अहुणिअ-महत्तं परिक्खणं।

साहिच्चस्स रूवं

जइण-मुणिहिं पाअड-भासाए पओगो कओ, जओ सा लोअ-भासा आसी। तेहिं 'वसुदेवहिंडी' अ 'पउमचरियं' सारिच्छा महा-गंथा रइआ।

धम्म-बोधो

एआहिं कहाहिं अिहंसा, सच्चं अ कम्म-सिद्धंतो परूविओ। जो जीवो िहंसं करेइ, सो दुक्खं भुंजइ।

सोह-अज्झयणेण एवं दीसइ I

विसरिअ मा

विसयस्स महत्तंपायाकय भासा लोइय भासा होइ। तस्स साहित्ते पायो अद्धमागही भासा अ मराठी पायाकय भासा वुज्झइ। अद्धमागही भासा गंथाणं अत्थे वुज्झइ, अ मराठी भासा कहा अ कव्वे अत्थे वुज्झइ।

पाअग-जइण-साहिच्चस्स अज्झयणं अहुणिअ-काले महत्तपुण्णं अत्थि। एयस्स विसयस्स मुक्ख-महत्तं हेिअ-लिहिअं अत्थि:

अहिंसा-मग्गो: जइण-अक्खाणाणि जगाए अहिंसाए य संति-मग्गं दंसेति।
साहिच्चिअ-वारसो: पाअग-भासाए अमल्लो साहिच्चिअ-वारसो सुरक्खिअं करणिज्जो अत्थि।
नीइ-सिक्खा: एए अक्खाणा माणुस-जीवणे नीइ-मल्लाणं सिक्खं देति।
कम्म-विवागो: कम्म-सिद्धंतस्स अज्झयणेण माणुसो अप्पणो जीवणं सुधारेइ।

जइण-कहाणं विभागो

जइण-अक्खाणाणं भेदा"एयम्मि ओसप्पिणी-काले चउवीस तित्थयरा, बारस चक्कवट्टी, णव बलदेवा, णव वासुदेवा य णव पडिवासुदेवा होंति। एते सव्वे सिलागा-पुरिसा पण्णत्ता।"
(अर्थ: या अवसर्पिणी काळात २४ तीर्थंकर, १२ चक्रवर्ती, ९ बलदेव, ९ वासुदेव आणि ९ प्रति-वासुदेव होतात. या सर्वांना 'शलाका पुरुष' म्हटले जाते.)
"एयम्मि ओसप्पिणी-काले चउवीस तित्थयरा, बारस चक्कवट्टी, णव बलदेवा, णव वासुदेवा य णव पडिवासुदेवा होंति। एते सव्वे सिलागा-पुरिसा पण्णत्ता।"
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सिलागा-पुरिस चरिअ:
विज्जाहर कहा:
धम्मकहा
एवं, पाअग-अक्खाणाणि माणुस-जीवणे धम्म-विवागं दंसेति।

एयम्मि संसोधण-लेखे पाअग-जइण-साहिच्चस्स अक्खाणाणं (मिथाणं) विविह-रूवाणं अज्झयणं कयं अत्थि। जइण-पोराणिअ-कहाओ केवलं मणोरंजणं णत्थि, परं ताओ कम्म-सिद्धंतं, अहिंसा-धम्मं य उवदिसंति। लेखे 'पउमचरिअ' (जइण-रामायणं), भरह-बाहुबली-जुद्धं य 'समराइच्चकहा' इच्चादीणं विलेसाणं मीमंसा कया अत्थि। संखेवेण, एअं अज्झयणं पाअग-साहिच्चस्स आधम्मिअ-साहिच्चिअ-महत्तं पगासेइ।

साहिच्चिअ-मीमंसा

पाअग-मज्झिअ (प्राकृत मजकूर):
पाअग-जइण-साहिच्चं केवलं धम्मिअ-गंधा णत्थि, परं ताणि उच्च-कोडीए साहिच्च-किईओ अत्थि। एयस्स साहिच्चस्स मुक्ख-लक्खणाणि हेिअ-लिहिअं अत्थि:
भासा-सरुवं: जइण-अक्खाणेसु 'महाराष्ट्री' य 'अर्धमागधी' पाअग-भासाए पओगो कयो अत्थि। एअं भासा कोमला य सरला अत्थि।
अलङ्कार-जोअणा: कवीहिं उपमा, रूवगं य अइसेसोक्कि-अलङ्काराणं सुंदरो पओगो कयो अत्थि।
रस-विवागो: एएहिं अक्खाणेसु 'वीर-रसो', 'अब्भुअ-रसो' य अंते 'सन्त-रसो' मुक्ख-रूवेण दीसइ।
पुव्वभव-कहा (पूर्वजन्म): जइण-साहिच्चस्स इअं विसेसता अत्थि जइ, एत्थ नायगस्स पुव्व-भवाणं विलेसं दिज्जइ।

साहिच्चिअ अंग	प्राकृत हीन
रीइ	भासा सरल अ ओबोदी होईI

छंदो 'गाहा'	**छंदान बहु उपयोग होईI**
सन्त-रसो	**वैराग्ग अ सान्तिया मुख्य उद्देस होईI**
वण्णणं कयमI	**निसग्गे नगराणं सुक्खं वण्णणं**

अहुति।

गाहा (गाथा):

पणमिऊण जिणमग्गं, विरइअं पउमचरिअं एअं।

लोआण हिअत्थाए, सुणंतु बुह-जणा सव्वे॥

एए अक्खाणा केवलं कहाओ णत्थि, परं ताणि कम्म-सिद्धांतं, अहिंसा-मग्गं य दंसेति। एयम्मि संसोधण-लेखे जइण-पोराणिअ-कहाणं विविह-भेदाणं अज्झयणं करिज्जइ।

अक्खाणाणं भेदा

जइण-साहिच्चे अक्खाणाणि तिन्नि भेदाणि अत्थि:

१. सिलागा-पुरिस चरिअ: ६३ महापुरुसाणं कहाओ (तित्थयर, चक्कवट्टीजिणधम्मे तिसट्ठि सलागा पुरिसा होन्ति)। ते तिणि वर्गेसु विभागिया होन्ति।

१. चोवीस तित्थंकरा (२४)

चोवीस तित्थंकरा लोयाणं मोक्खमग्गं देन्ति।

2. बार चक्कवत्ती (१२)

चक्कवत्ती लोयेसु महाबलं अ राज्जसिरिं पावन्ति।

3.सत्तवीस बलदेवा, वासुदेवा अ पडिवासुदेवा (२७)

बलदेवा धम्मसिला होन्ति,

वासुदेवा पराक्कमी होन्ति,

पडिवासुदेवा तेसं विरुद्धा होन्ति।

एते सव्वे मिलिया तिसट्ठि सलागा पुरिसा होन्ति। इ.)।

२. विज्जाहर कहा: विज्जाहराणं अदभुआ कहाओ। जह - पउमचरिअं।

विज्जाधरा कहा पायो पायाकय साहित्ते वुज्झइ।

- एत्थ विज्जाधराणं साहस, पराक्कम अ धम्मभावो वण्णिओ होइ।
- विज्जाधरा विज्जा-मंतबलेण गगणे गच्छन्ति, रूपं परिवत्तन्ति अ अद्दिस्सा होन्ति।
- कहासु नायक-नायिका, प्रेम, परीक्षा अ विजय वण्णणा होइ।
- एया कहा लोयाणं मनोरंजण अ नीति-उपदेस देइ।

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३. धम्मकहा: कम्म-विवागं दंसण-कहाओ। जह - समराइच्चकहा।

- धम्मकहा पायाकय साहित्ते बहु पसिद्धा होइ।
- एसा कहा धम्म, सील, किम्म अ मोक्खमग्गं वण्णेइ।
- कहारूपेण लोयाणं उवएसो दिओइ।
- धम्मकहा सरळ भासाए होइ, तें लोया सहजेण बुझ्झन्ति।

पउमचरिअं: रावण-अक्खाण (जैन रामायण)

पउमचरिए रावणो मंस-भक्खणो रक्खसो णत्थि, परं सो विज्जाहर-नरिंदो आसि।

गाहा (गाथा):

ण य रक्खसो त्ति कोइ, विज्जाहर-वंस-संभवो राया।

दसाणणो त्ति नामं, मणिरयण-पहा-पडिबिंबेहिं॥

तस्स दस-मुहाणि णत्थि, परं तस्स कंठे णव-मणि-हारो आसि, तहिं मुहाणं पडिबिंबाणि दीसंति। रावणो जिण-भत्तो आसि। कोवेण सो सीआए हरणं कासी, परं पच्छा तस्स मणे पच्छातावो जाउ।

भरह-बाहुबली जुद्धं (अहंकार-विणासो)

भरह-बाहुबलीणं मज्झे घोर-जुद्धं जाअं। सेणाणं नासं वारिउं तेहिं 'दिट्ठि-जुद्धं', 'जल-जुद्धं' य 'मल्ल-जुद्धं' कयं। सव्वेसु जुद्धेसु बाहुबली जिणिओ। भरहेण 'चक्करयणं' मुक्कं, परं तं बाहुबलीए सरीरं ण हिंसइ। तं दट्ठूण बाहुबलीए मणे विरत्ती उप्पण्णा।

हरिभद्दसूरी-विरइअ 'समराइच्चकहा' (कम्म-विवागो)

एइ कहाए कम्म-सिद्धंतो णव-भव-वेरं य परुविअं अत्थि।

गाहा (गाथा):

जह कम्मं कुणइ माणुसो, तह फलु भुंजइ सो नियमेण।

कोहो य दोसो य संसार-कारणं, खमा उ मुक्ख-मग्गो अत्थि॥

जह कम्मं कुणइ माणुसो, तह फलु भुंजइ सो नियमेण। एयम्मि गंधे माणुस-जीवणे धम्मस्स महत्तं दंसिअं अत्थि।

"जिण-मिहगा (Jain Mitaka)"

☞ जिण-मिहगा जिणधम्मस्स साहित्ते महत्तरा ठाणं होन्ति।

एते मिहगा लोयाणं धम्म, नीइ, सील अ जीवणमग्गं सिक्खावन्ति। जिण-मिहगेसु तित्थंकराणं, सलागापुरिसाणं, साधूणं अ साद्वीयाणं जीवणकहा वण्णिया होन्ति। एया कहा लोयाणं भावणं जणन्ति अ मनं पसायन्ति।

☞ जिण-मिहगेसु अहिंसा, सच्च, अचोरिया, ब्रह्मचरिय अ अपरिग्गह इमे पंच महव्वया पायो वण्णिया होन्ति। कहा-रूपेण धम्मोपदेसो दिओइ, तें लोया सहजेण बुझ्झन्ति। एते मिहगा सरळ भासाए लिहिया होन्ति, तस्स कारणेण सव्वसामान्न लोया तं साहित्तं पसन्दन्ति।

☞ जिण-मिहगा लोइय अ लोउत्तरस्स जीवणस्स संतुलणं दंसेंति। ते कर्मसिद्धान्तं, पुनब्भव, मोक्खमग्गं अ आत्मसुद्धिं विसारेण वण्णेन्ति। एते मिहगा केवलं मनोरंजणं न होंति, किंतु लोयाणं जीवणे सुमार्गं दंसेंति।

☞ एवमेव जिण-मिहगा जिणधम्मस्स मूल्य अ परंपराणं रक्खा करन्ति।

गाथा:

☞ अहिंसा सच्च सीलं च,

जिण-मिहगेसु पसिद्धं।
कहा-रूवेण धम्मो,
लोयाणं हिययं पसायइ॥
अर्थ (समजण्यासाठी):
जैन मिथकांमध्ये अहिंसा, सत्य आणि शील प्रसिद्ध आहेत.
कथांच्या रूपाने धर्म सांगितला जातो
आणि तो लोकांचे हृदय प्रसन्न करतो.

एते मिहगा जिणधम्मस्स तत्वाणं, नीइयाणं अ जीवणमूल्लाणं लोकाणं समजावन्ति। कथा-रूपेण धम्मो वण्णिओ होइ, तस्स कारणेण लोया सहजेण तं बुझ्झन्ति अ अंगीकरन्ति। जिण-मिहगेसु तित्थंकराणं, सलागापुरिसाणं, साधूणं, साद्वीयाणं अ उत्तम गृहस्थाणं जीवणकहा वण्णिया होन्ति।

☞ जिण-मिहगेसु अहिंसा पव्वयं पमुख्कं होइ।

अहिंसा, सच्च, अचोरिया, ब्रह्मचरिय अ अपरिग्गह — इमे पंच महव्वया एत्थ बारंबारं दिस्सन्ति। एया कथा लोयाणं मनस्सं पसायन्ति अ दयाभावं जणन्ति। प्राणीमत्तेसु करुणा, सव्वे जीवा समानं होन्ति — एसा भावो जिण-मिहगेसु पायो वण्णिओ होइ।

☞ जिण-मिहगा कर्मसिद्धान्तं विसारेण दंसेंति।

सुकम्मेण सुक्फलं, पावकम्मेण दुक्फलं — एसा सिद्धान्तो कथाणं माध्यमेण स्पुट्टो होइ। पुनब्भव, बंध, संवर, निर्जरा अ मोक्ख — एते तत्त्वा जिण-मिहगेसु सहजरीत्या समजाविया होन्ति। एते मिहगा लोइय अ लोउत्तरस्स जीवणस्स संतुलणं दंसेंति।

☞ भासाया दृष्ट्या जिण-मिहगा बहु सरळ होन्ति।

एते अर्धमागधी पायाकय भासाए लिहिया होन्ति, तस्स कारणेण सव्वसामान्न लोया अपि तं साहित्तं बुझ्झन्ति। अलंकारा अपेक्षा कम्मा होन्ति, भाव अ उद्देसो मुख्यो होइ। कथा-रूपेण उपदेसो दिओइ, तें साहित्तं रुचिरं अ प्रभावियं होइ।

☞ जिण-मिहगा केवलं मनोरंजणं न होंति।

ते लोयाणं जीवणे सुमार्गं दंसेंति, चित्तसुद्धिं करन्ति अ वैराग्ग-भावं वद्धेंति। एते मिहगा जिणधम्मस्स परंपराणं रक्खा करन्ति अ नवपीढीयं धम्मस्स परिचयं देन्ति।

☞ एवमेव जिण-मिहगा जिणधम्मस्स साहित्ते अनमोलं धणं होन्ति।

गाथा—माला : जिण-मिहगा

1
जिणधम्मस्स साहित्ते, जिण-मिहगा पसिद्धा।
अहिंसा-मूलधम्मो, एत्थ सव्वं पविद्धा॥
2
कहा-रूवेण धम्मो, लोयाणं बोहइ चित्तं।
सरळा भासा एत्थ, होइ सुहावं सुत्तं॥
3
तित्थंकरा महावीरा, सीलसंपन्न जीवणा।
तेसिं कहा पवित्ती, लोयाणं देइ सीणा॥
4
साधू साद्वी अ गिहिणो, सव्वे धम्मपयत्ता।
कम्मसिद्धन्त दंसेंति, कथा-मग्गेण सुत्ता॥

5
अहिंसा सच्च अचोरिया, ब्रह्मचरियं पवित्तं।
अपरिग्गहं महाव्वयं, मिहगेसु विसिद्धं॥
6
सुकम्मे सुक्फलं होइ, पावकम्मे दुक्फलं।
एसा नीई कथाणं, करइ जीवणं सुफलं॥
7
बंधो संवर निर्जरा, मोक्खमग्गो पवत्तो।
एते तत्ता कथाणं, सुहमेण वण्णत्ता॥
8
लोइय-लोउत्तर जीवणं, संतुलणं दंसेंति।
वैराग्ग अ सांतिभावं, मिहगा वद्धेंति॥
9
अलंकारा न बहु एत्थ, भावो होइ पमुख्को।
उद्देसो लोकहियो, धम्मो सव्वं सुहुक्को॥
10
पायाकय भासाए, मिहगा लिहिया होन्ति।
तेण सव्वे लोया अपि, सहजें बुझ्झन्ति॥
11
मनोरंजण मात्रं न, एया कहा महन्ता।
जीवणमग्गं दंसेंति, चित्तं करन्ति सन्ता॥
12
परंपराणं रक्खा, जिणधम्मस्स करन्ति।
नवपीढीयं धम्मस्स, परिचयं देन्ति॥
13
एवमेव जिण-मिहगा, साहित्ते अनमोलं।
धम्म-नीई-मूल्लाणं, एत्थ सव्वं सुकोमलं॥

बहुणं एवं मयं I
एअं अइ-पाइणं अत्थि I
गंथेसु उल्लेहो अत्थि I

☞ जिण-मीहगा जिणधम्मस्स साहित्ते बहु महत्तरा ठाणं होन्ति।

सतपुरिसा, पंडिया अ धम्मनिहिया एत्थ जिण-मीहगाणं बहु आदरं करन्ति। तेसं मत्तं एत्थ एसा होइ जे जिण-मीहगा केवलं कहा न होन्ति, किंतु धम्म-नीई-मूल्लाणं सुस्पुट्टो उपदेसो देन्ति। कथा-रूवेण धम्मो वण्णिओ होइ, तेण लोया सहजेण तं बुझ्झन्ति अ अंगीकरन्ति।

☞ सताणं मत्तं एसा होइ जे जिण-मीहगेसु अहिंसा पमुख्को धम्मो होइ।

सव्वे जीवा समानं होन्ति, कइं पि जीवेसु हिंसा न कयव्वा — एसा भावो कथाणं माध्यमेण वण्णिओ होइ। सच्च, अचोरिया, ब्रह्मचरिय अ अपरिग्गह — इमे पंच महव्वया जिण-मीहगेसु बारंबारं दिस्सन्ति। सतपुरिसा मन्नन्ति जे एया कहा लोयाणं हिययं पसायन्ति अ दयाभावं जणन्ति।

☞ कर्मसिद्धन्तो अपि जिण-मीहगेसु विसारेण वण्णिओ होइ।

सताणं मत्तं एसा होइ जे सुकम्मेण सुक्फलं अ पावकम्मेण दुक्फलं — एसा नीई कथाणं माध्यमेण बहु सहजरीत्या समजाविया होइ। पुनब्भव, बंध, संवर, निर्जरा अ मोक्ख — एते तत्ता जिण-मीहगेसु कथारूपेण स्पुट्टा होन्ति। तेण लोया आप्पणं जीवणं सुधारन्ति।

☞ भासाया दृष्ट्या सतपुरिसा जिण-मीहगाणं सरळतं पसंसन्ति।

एते मिहगा पायाकय अ अर्धमागधी भासाए लिहिया होन्ति। अलंकारा अपेक्षा कम्मा होन्ति, भाव अ उद्देसो मुख्यो होइ। तस्स कारणेण सव्वसामान्न लोया अपि एया कहा सहजेण बुझ्झन्ति। सताणं मत्तं एसा होइ जे सरळ भासा धम्मोपदेसाय बहु उपयुता होइ।

☞ जिण-मीहगा केवलं मनोरंजणं न होन्ति।

सतपुरिसा मन्नन्ति जे एते मिहगा लोयाणं जीवणे सुमार्गं दंसेंति, वैराग्ग-भावं वर्द्धेति अ चित्तसुद्धिं करन्ति। एते मिहगा जिणधम्मस्स परंपराणं रक्खा करन्ति अ नवपीढीयं धम्मस्स परिचयं देन्ति।

☞ एवमेव सताणं मत्तेण जिण-मीहगा जिणधम्मस्स साहित्ते अनमोलं धणं होन्ति।

णिग्गमण (निष्कर्ष - Conclusion)

एवं, पाअग-जइण-साहिच्चे अक्खाणाणं महत्तं विविह-रूवेहिं दिट्ठं जाअं। पउमचरिअ-समराइच्चकहा-अइ-गंधेसु माणुस-जीवणे कम्म-विवागो, अहिंसा-मग्गो य परुविओ अत्थि। एए अक्खाणा माणुसस्स आधम्मिअ-उद्धाराए सु-म ग्गं दंसेति। पाअग-साहिच्चं भारतीय-संकिईए एक्को अमल्लो निही अत्थि।

पहुअ-पाअग-जइण-साहिच्चं भारतीय-संकिईए एक्को विपुलो निही अत्थि। एयम्मि संसोधण-लेखे जइण-अक्खाणाणं (मिथाणं) तत्त-मीमंसा कया अत्थि। अज्झयणस्स मुक्ख-पओअणं अक्खाणेसु कम्म-सिद्धंतस्स य अहिंसा-धम्मस्स अण्णेसणं अत्थि। लेखे विमलसूरी-विरइअ 'पउमचरिए' रावणस्स विज्जाहर-सरुवं, भरह-बाहुबली-जुद्धे माणा-विणासो य हरिभद्दसूरी-विरइअ 'समराइच्चकहाए' भव-भमणं विसेस-रूवेण विलेसिअं अत्थि। संसोधणेण एअं सिद्धं जाअं जइ, जइण-मिथाणि केवलं कल्पना-कहाओ णत्थि, परं ताओ माणुस-जीवणे नीइ-मल्लाणं पालिअं करेति।

आधार-गंध-सूई (संदर्भ सूची)

१. विमलसूरी: पउमचरिअं (जइण-रामायणं)।
२. हरिभद्दसूरी: समराइच्चकहा।
३. उज्जोयणसूरी: कुवलयमाला।
४. डॉ. जगदीशचंद्र जैन: पाअग-साहिच्चस्स इतिहासो।
५. डॉ. ए. एन. उपाध्ये: पाअग-भासा-अज्झयणं।

'भोलाराम का जीव' में मिथक सहारे भ्रष्ट नौकरशाही पर तीखा प्रहार

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शोधालेख का सार :

'भोलाराम का जीव' कहानी में हरिशंकर परसाई ने मिथक के सहारे भ्रष्ट नौकरशाही और उनकी असंवेदनशीलता पर तीखा प्रहार किया है। इसके लिए उन्होंने कई पौराणिक पात्रों का सहारा लिया दिखाई देता है। प्रस्तुत कहानी में शासकीय कार्यालयों में छोटे-छोटे कामों के लिए आम आदमी को किस प्रकार चक्कर कांटने पड़ते हैं, घूस न देने पर काम कैसे रोका जाता है और आम आदमी शासकीय कार्यालय के चक्कर कांटते-कांटते कैसे थक जाता है, इसका व्यंग्यात्मक रूप में बेहतरीन चित्रण हरिशंकर परसाई ने किया है। इसके लिए उन्होंने मिथक का सहारा लिया हुआ दिखाई देता है।

बीज-शब्द : भोलाराम का जीव, हरिशंकर परसाई, भ्रष्ट नौकरशाही, नौकरशाही की असंवेदनशीलता।

'भोलाराम का जीव' प्रसिद्ध व्यंग्यकार हरिशंकर परसाई की कहानी है। इसमें उन्होंने धर्मराज, चित्रगुप्त, यमदूत जैसे पौराणिक पात्र तथा भोलाराम, उसकी पत्नी, परिवार के सदस्य, तथा शासकीय कार्यालय में काम करनेवाले कर्मचारियों जैसे आधुनिक पात्रों के माध्यम से शासकीय कार्यालय चलनेवाले भ्रष्टाचार तथा आम आदमी के प्रति शासकीय कार्यालयों में दिखाई जानेवाली असंवेदनशीलता पर प्रकाश डाला है। प्रस्तुत कहानी में हरिशंकर परसाई ने व्यंग्यात्मक शैली में भ्रष्ट-शासन व्यवस्था, नौकरशाही व्यवस्था पर तीखा प्रहार किया है। प्रस्तुत कहानी में भोलाराम जैसे एक गरीब कर्मचारी को अपनी पेंशन के लिए शासकीय कार्यालय में पाँच साल चक्कर लगाने पड़ते हैं। फिर भी उसे पेंशन नहीं मिलती है। उसको परिवार चलाने के लिए सब गहने-बर्तन बेचने पड़ते हैं, गंदी जगह, छोटे-से कमरे में परिवार साथ रहना पड़ता है। पेंशन न मिलने के कारण वह घर का किराया तक नहीं दे सकता। पेंशन के लिए वह संबंधित कार्यालय को निरंतर खत भेजता रहता है लेकिन भोलाराम उन्हें घूस दे न सकने के कारण उसकी फाईल में कुछ न कुछ खामी निकाली जाती है। आखिर भूखमरी से भोलाराम की मौत हो जाती है। इस प्रकार शासकीय व्यवस्था का भयावह चित्रण हरिशंकर परसाई ने किया है।

प्रस्तुत कहानी में बताया है कि भोलाराम के मरने के बाद उसकी जान अपने पेंशन की फाईल में अटक जाती है। क्योंकि उसे अपने पत्नी और बच्चों के भविष्य चिंता है। यमराज जब भोलाराम को लेने के लिए आते हैं, तब भोलाराम जीव चमका देकर अपनी पेंशन की फाईल में बैठ जाती है। यमराज ने पाँच दिन पूरा ब्रह्मांड छान लेते हैं, फिर भी भोलाराम जीव नहीं मिलता। इसलिए यमराज निराश होकर फिर स्वर्ग में वापस जाना पड़ता है। इस प्रकार यहाँ पौराणिक पात्र, जीव तथा स्वर्ग के चित्रण के लिए मिथक का आधार लिया हुआ दिखाई देता है। प्रस्तुत कहानी में यमराज स्वर्ग में जाने के बाद स्वर्ग की स्थिति का चित्रण किया है।

भोलाराम को लाने के लिए गए यमराज पाँच दिनों से गायब होने के कारण स्वर्गलोक में चित्रगुप्त और धर्मराज चिंतीत दिखाई देते है। इसलिए चित्रगुप्त धर्मराज से कहते हैं- "धर्मराज लाखों वर्षों से असंख्य आदमियों को कर्म और सिफारिश के आधार पर स्वर्ग या नरक में निवास-स्थान 'अलाट' करते आ रहे थे। पर ऐसा कभी नहीं हुआ था। सामने बैठे चित्रगुप्त बार-बार चश्मा पोंछ, बार-बार थूक से पन्ने पलट, रजिस्टर पर रजिस्टर देख रहे थे।"[1] इस प्रकार सामान्य पृथ्वी पर जिस प्रकार किसी कार्यालय में बातचीत होती है, उसी प्रकार चित्रगुप्त और धर्मराज के बीच के बातचीत को दिखाने का प्रयास किया है।

यमदूत खाली हाथ जब स्वर्ग पहुँचते हैं तब स्वर्ग पाप-पुण्य का हिसाब रखनेवाले चित्रगुप्त को भोलाराम का जीव गायब होने के संदर्भ में बताते हैं। तब इन पात्रों के सहारे लेखक ने पृथ्वी पर बढ़ रहे अनाचार और धोखाधड़ी के संदर्भ में भी चित्रण किया है। वे कहते हैं कि लोग दोस्तों को कुछ चीजें भेजते हैं, तो रेलवाले उसे रास्ते में ही उड़ा देते हैं। होजरी के पार्सलों

के मोजे रेलवे अफसर पहनते हैं। इसी प्रकार वर्तमान राजनीति पर भी इसमें व्यंग्य किया है। जिस प्रकार भोलाराम का जीव गायब हो गया, उसी प्रकार राजनीति दलों के नेताओं को भी विपक्षी दल गायब कर देते हैं। उन्हें लगता है कि कहीं भोलाराम के जीव को भी किसी विरोधी ने तो नहीं गायब किया होगा? यहाँ पर हरिशंकर परसाई पर पौराणिक मिथक के माध्यम से वर्तमान राजनीति पर व्यंग्य किया है। तब चित्रगुप्त की यह बातों सुनकर धर्मराज उन पर गुस्सा हो जाते हैं। इसलिए वे चित्रगुप्त से कहते हैं कि आपकी रिटायमेंट का समय करीब आ गया है। भोलाराम जैसे गरीब आदमी को कौन उड़ा देगा? इस प्रकार प्रस्तुत कहानी में देवताओं का भी मानवीकरण किया हुआ दिखाई देता है।

प्रस्तुत कहानी में स्वर्ग और नरक कल्पनाएँ की गई हैं। स्वर्ग याने यहाँ अच्छाई का प्रतीक है, तो नरक याने बुराई प्रतीक है। ऐसा माना जाता है कि अच्छा कर्म करनेवाला व्यक्ति स्वर्ग में जाता और बुरा कर्म करनेवाला व्यक्ति नरक में जाता है। प्रस्तुत कहानी में इस पर व्यंग्य करते हुए बताया है कि आज समाज में बुराई इतनी पनप रही है कि स्वर्ग से ज्यादा नरक में जानेवालों की संख्या बढ़ गई है। इसलिए नरक में लोगों को रखने के लिए जगह कम पड़ रही है। इसी बात को लेकर प्रस्तुत कहानी में धर्मराज और चित्रगुप्त चिंतीत दिखाई देते हैं। नरक के निवासस्थान की समस्या के संदर्भ में जब नारदमुनि पूछते हैं तब धर्मराज बताते हैं, "वह समस्या तो कभी की हल हो गयी। नरक में पिछले सालों से बड़े गुणी कारीगर आ गये हैं। कई इमारतों के ठेकेदार हैं, जिन्होंने पूरे पैसे लेकर रद्दी इमारतें बनायीं।...इन्होंने बहुत जल्दी नरक में कई इमारतें तान दी हैं।"[2] इस प्रकार आज समाज में भ्रष्टाचार कितना बढ़ रहा हैं, इस प्रकार प्रकाश डालने का प्रयास कहानीकार ने किया है। वे नारदमुनि को बताते हैं स्वर्ग की निवासस्थान की समस्या हल हो गई है लेकिन भोलाराम नामक व्यक्ति का जीव पाँच दिनों से गायब है। इस पर नारदमुनि मनुष्य की तरह पूछते हैं कि 'उस पर इन्कमटैक्स तो बकाया नहीं था?' हो सकता है उन लोगों ने उसे रोका होगा। एक गरीब आदमी के पास पैसा ही नहीं तो उसके इन्कमटैक्स का सवाल ही नहीं होता। इसलिए चित्रगुप्त कहते हैं 'इनकम होता तो टैक्स होगा?' यह तो भूख से मरा है। इस प्रकार यहाँ पौराणिक देवताओं का भी यहाँ मानवीकरण किया हुआ दिखाई देता है।

प्रस्तुत नारदमुनि चित्रगुप्त से भोलाराम की पूरी जानकारी लेकर पृथ्वी पर खोजने के लिए जाते हैं। चित्रगुप्त अपने रजिस्टर में देखकर भोलाराम का पूरा नाम और पता बताते हैं। वह उसका नाम और पता बताते समय उसकी हालत के संदर्भ में बताते हैं। पौराणिक पात्र चित्रगुप्त के संदर्भ में बताया जाता है है कि उनके पास प्रत्येक व्यक्ति के कर्म का लेखाजोखा होता है। प्रस्तुत कहानी में चित्रगुप्त अपने रजिस्टर में होनेवाली जानकारी के आधार पर बताते हैं कि भोलाराम जबलपुर शहर के एक मोहल्ले में नाले के किनारे एक छोटेसे कमरे में अपने परिवार के साथ रहता था। वह व्यक्ति पाँच साल पहले रिटायर होने के बावजूद उसकी पेंशन शुरू नहीं हुई थी। शासकीय व्यवस्था को वह पेंशन के लिए घूस न दे सकने के कारण उसका पेंशन का काम रूका था। इसलिए पिछले एक साल से उसके मकान का किराया बकाया है। इसलिए मकान का मालिक उसे घर से बाहर निकालना चाहता था। इतने में भोलाराम की मौत हो गई। वे नारद को बताते हैं कि अगर उसे मकान मालिक ने घर से निकाला होगा तो आपको खोजना मुश्किल होगा। प्रस्तुत कहानी में जब नारदमुनि भोलाराम के घर जाते हैं, तब पुलिस की तरह उनकी पूछताछ करते हैं। तब उसकी पत्नी नारदमुनि को सब हालत बताती है। नारदमुनि जब भोलाराम के चरित्र पर संशय लेने प्रयास करते हैं तब उसकी पत्नी नारदमुनि पर गुस्सा हो जाती है। यह पत्नी याने एक भारतीय पत्नी का प्रतीक है, जो अपने पति को देवता के समान मानती है। इसलिए वह नारदमुनि पर गुस्सा करते हुई कहती है-"हर कुछ मत बको महाराज! तुम साधु हो, उचक्के नहीं हो। जिंदगीभर उन्होंने किसी दूसरी स्त्री को आँख उठाकर नहीं देखा।"[3] इस प्रकार भोलाराम की पत्नी नारदमुनि पर गुस्सा होती है और अंत में कार्यालय में जाकर अपने पति के पेंशन का मामला सुलझाने के लिए कहती हैं।

इसके बाद नारदमुनि भोलराम का पेंशन का मामला सुलझाने के लिए शासकीय कार्यालय में जाते हैं, तब उन्हें भोलाराम की तरह ही अनुभव आता है। उसे एक टेबल से दूसरे टेबल पर घूमाया जाता है लेकिन उसका काम करने के लिए कोई तैयार नहीं होता। इस संदर्भ में कहानी में लिखा है-"नारद उस बाबू के पास गये। उसने तीसरे के पास भेजा, तीसरे ने चौथे के पास, चौथे ने पाँचवें के पास। जब नारद पचीस-तीस बाबुओं और अफसरों के पास घूम आये तब एक चपरासी ने

कहा, "महाराज, आप क्यों इस झंझट पड़ गये। आप अगर साल-भर भी यहाँ चक्कर लगाते रहें तो भी काम नहीं होगा। आप तो सीधे बड़े साहब से मिलिए। उन्हें खुश कर लिया, तो अभी काम हो जायेगा।""[4] इस प्रकार यहाँ शासकीय कार्यालय में घूस लिए बगैरे कैसे काम नहीं होता, बताने का प्रयास किया है। प्रस्तुत कहानी में नारद के पास घूस देने के लिए कुछ न होने के कारण उसकी वीणा को घूस के रूप में लिया जाता है। तभी उस कार्यालय के लोग भोलाराम का पेंशन का काम करने के लिए तैयार हो जाते हैं। तब पेंशन की फाईल से भोलाराम की आवाज आती है और नारदमुनि और भोलाराम की भेंट होती है। इस प्रकार पौराणिक मिथक के माध्यम से भ्रष्ट-शासन व्यवस्था की पोलखोल प्रसिद्ध व्यंग्यकार हरिशंकर परसाई ने की है।

'भोलाराम का जीव' रचना के माध्यम से उन्होंने शासकीय-व्यवस्था भ्रष्टाचार और मानवीय संवेदनहीनता पर करारा व्यंग्य किया है। उन्होंने प्राचीन पौराणिक मिथकों को आधुनिक ढाँचे में ढालकर वर्तमान व्यवस्था को चित्रित करने का प्रयास किया है। इसलिए तो डॉ. कृष्ण बिहारी राँय लिखते हैं- "भोलाराम के जीव के पौराणिक पात्र नारद के द्वारा एकदम नये ढंग से अपनी बात रखी है। समाज की संचरचनात्मक विद्रुपताओं को कहानी का प्रमुख घटक बनाया है। कहानी के मुख्य उद्देश्य के साथ-साथ परसाई दूसरी भी कुछ चुभती हुई बातें भी बखूबी कहते चलते हैं।"[5] इस कहानी की शुरुआत स्वर्ग और नरक की कल्पना से होती है। भारतीय समाज में अच्छा कर्म करनेवाला व्यक्ति स्वर्ग में जाता है तो बूरा कर्म करनेवाला व्यक्ति नरक में जाता है, ऐसा माना जाता है। प्रस्तुत कहानी में परसाई मिथक का मानवीकरण करने का भी प्रयास किया है।

भारतीय दर्शन में जीव अमर होता है, कहा है। उनका मानना है कि जीव याने आत्मा को न शस्त्र से काँटा जा सकता है, न आग से जलाया जा सकता है। भारतीय पुराण कथाओं में कहा गया है कि मृत्यु के बाद जीव अच्छा कर्म हो तो स्वर्ग में और बुरा कर्म हो तो नरक में चला जाता है। इस जीव को लाने के लिए यमदूत जाते हैं। इस प्रकार विविध कथाओं प्रयोग किए जानेवाले मिथक का प्रयोग प्रस्तुत कहानी में भी किया हुआ दिखाई देता है। इस मिथक के संदर्भ में डॉ. अर्जुन चव्हाण लिखते हैं-'मिथक' के संदर्भ में डॉ. अर्जुन चव्हाण लिखते हैं-"हर समाज और संस्कृति में मिथकीय कथाएँ मिलती हैं। प्रत्येक प्रदेश में अनेक मिथकीय प्रयोग हुआ करते हैं। किंतु एक भू-प्रदेश के मिथक दूसरे भू-प्रदेश के लोगों के लिए परिचित होते हैं ऐसा नहीं। अधिकतर मिथक ऐसे मिलते हैं जो विशिष्ट भू-भाग में ही पाए जाते हैं।"[6] प्रस्तुत कहानी में भी पौराणिक कथाओं में प्रयुक्त मिथकों का प्रयोग किया हुआ दिखाई देता है।

प्रस्तुत कहानी में यमदूत मनुष्य के शरीर से आत्मा लेकर आते हैं लेकिन यहाँ पर भोलाराम के जीव ने ही यमदूत को चकमा दिया है। प्रस्तुत कहानी में चित्रगुप्त और धर्मराज एक बेबस नौकरशाह के रूप में चित्रित किया है। क्योंकि दोनों को इस स्वर्ग और नरक की व्यवस्था देखनी पड़ती है। नरक में लोगों को रखने के लिए जगह न होने के कारण दोनों भी यहाँ चिंतीत दिखाई देते हैं।

भारतीय कथाओं में नारमुनि का चित्रण कई जगहों पर आता है। वे एक जगह की खबर दूसरी जगह पहुँचाते हुए दिखाई देते हैं। सभी जगहों की खबर नारद को होती है, ऐसा लोगों को मानना है। वे अलग-अलग रूपों में जाकर वहाँ की खबर निकालते हैं। प्रस्तुत कहानी में भोलाराम का पता लगाने के लिए नारदमुनि की पृथ्वी पर साधु रूप लेकर जाते हैं और शासकीय कार्यालय के भ्रष्ट व्यवस्था का खुद अनुभव लेते हुए दिखाई देते हैं। इसप्रकार प्रस्तुत कहानी में मिथक के माध्यम से वर्तमान भ्रष्ट नौकरशाही पर तीखा प्रहार करने का प्रयास कहानीकार ने किया है।

निष्कर्ष :

निष्कर्ष रूप में कहा जा सकता है कि 'भोलाराम का जीव' कहानी में हरिशंकर परसाई ने पौराणिक पात्रों के माध्यम से वर्तमान भ्रष्ट नौकरशाही, शासकीय कार्यालय में घूसखोरी की समस्या तथा आम आदमी के किए जानेवाले शोषण पर प्रकाश डालने का प्रयास किया है। प्रस्तुत कहानी यमदूत, नारदमुनि, चित्रगुप्त, धर्मराज आदि पौराणिक पात्रों तथा भोलराम, शासकीय कर्मचारी आदि पात्रों के माध्यम से वर्तमान समाज में बढ़ रहा अनाचार, भ्रष्टाचार आदि बातों पर प्रकाश डालने का प्रयास किया है। व्यवस्था के सामने प्रामाणिक, आम आदमी कितना हतबल हो जाता है, घूस के बगैर आज शासकीय कार्यालय में किस प्रकार काम नहीं होता, आदि बातों पर प्रकाश डालने का काम हरिशंकर परसाई ने भोलाराम का जीव कहानी के माध्यम से किया है।

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प्रस्तावना-

आपल्या जगण्यामध्ये जगण्याविषयीच्या काही धारणा समाविष्ट आहेत. मिथक म्हणजे देखील दुसरं तिसरं काही नसून जगण्याच्या प्रक्रियेत घडलेल्या व परंपरागत चालत आलेल्या जगण्यातील धारणा असतात. या धारणांचं आजच्या काळातील रुपातंरण हा अभ्यासाचा विषय आहे. पुराणकथा, प्राकथ्था, दंतकथा म्हणजेच मिथ असे जेव्हा आपण म्हणतो त्यावेळेस जगण्यातील सत्याचा अंश आणि त्या भोवती गुंफलेल्या कथा या अर्थाने मिथची संकल्पना लक्षात घेता येते. वर्तमानातील माणसाच्या जगण्याच्या ओघात त्याच्या सर्वसामान्य जगण्यात जगण्याविषयीच्या अनेक धारणा कल्पना निर्माण झालेल्या आहेत. त्याविषयीची कवीची निरीक्षणे आणि आकलन हे अनेक कथांना जन्म देणारे आहे. या अनुषंगाने मंगेश नारायणराव काळे यांच्या कवितेत काही कवितांचा येथे उहापोह करता येतो.

मिथ अथवा कल्पनाबंध हे आदिबंधांच्या निर्मितीची सामग्री आहे. मंगेश नारायणराव काळे यांच्या कवितेत आदिबंधात्मकता अधिक प्रमाणात आहे. समकालाच्या संदर्भातील या आदिबंधात्मकतेचे स्वरूप अधिक विशेष होय. काळयांच्या कवितेत आदिबंधात्मकता रूपक, पुराणकथा, पौराणिक पात्रे, लोककथा यांच्या माध्यमातून येते, मंगेश नारायणराव काळे यांचे 'शक्तीपाताचे स्त्रोत', 'नाळ तुटल्या प्रथम पुरुषाचे दृष्टांत' आणि 'तुतीय पुरुषाचे आगमन' हे कवितासंग्रह या दृष्टीने महत्त्वाचे आहेत. या संग्रहांच्या शीर्षकावरूनच यातील आदिबंधात्मकता लक्षात येते.

या कवितांमधून आधुनिक युगा नंतरच्या काळातील सर्वसामान्यांच्या जगण्यातील अनेक मिथकांना ठळक केलेले आहे. सामान्य माणसाचे जगणे आणि त्यातील उपरोध या मिथकांमधून खूप विलक्षणपणे समोर येतो. म्हणून या कविता या काळातील जगण्याच्या प्रातिनिधिक वाटतात. जगण्यात झालेले बदल मानवाचा त्याच्या विषयीच्या आणि त्याच्या जगण्याविषयीच्या धारणांपासून तुटलेला सहसंबंध आणि जगण्याच्या ओघात तयार झालेल्या नव्या धारणा यातून मानवी अस्तित्वाचे एक नवे अपरिचित रूप समोर येते. याविषयीच्या या कथा आहेत. दोन काळांमध्ये फूट पाडणारा दुवा हा नाळ तुटणे या मिथकाच्या रूपात समोर येतो. कवीने देखील 'नाळ तुटल्या प्रथम पुरुषाचे दृष्टांत' या कवितासंग्रहातील एका अपभ्रंश नावाच्या विभागात अशा नाळ तुटण्याच्या कथा दिलेल्या आहेत. पुराण कथेतील पात्रे, पुराणकथा तसेच जगण्याविषयीच्या संकल्पना या सर्वांचा मानवी जगण्याशी असलेला सहसंबंध नाळ तुटणे या एका शीर्षकाखाली त्यांचा झालेला अपभ्रंश या कथांमधून मांडलेला आहे. यामध्ये समकालाविषयीचे आणि मानवी जगण्याविषयीचे आकलन वैशिष्ट्यपूर्णरित्या विलक्षण व चपखल प्रतिमांच्या साहाय्याने समाविष्ट झालेले आहे.

नाळ तुटण्याच्या कथा-

घर-

१९९० नंतरच्या काळातील जवळ जवळ सर्व कवींचे म्हणणे आणि काळाचे अधोरेखन नाळ तुटणे हे आहे. जागतिकीकरणातील नाळ तुटण्याचा कल्पनाबंध काळयांच्या कवितेचे मध्यवर्ती सूत्र आहे. या कल्पनाबंधाच्या अनेक कथा रचल्या जातात. त्यासोबतच या संग्रहातील 'अपभ्रंश' या भागातील नाळेच्या अपभ्रंशाचे आकार हे देखील त्याचेच रूपक होय. समाधान, स्वप्न, यश यांचा नुसता आकार म्हणजे आपण. खरंतर सर्वसामान्य माणसाच्या पॅन्टला खिशाच नसतो तर एक त्या जागी नोटेचा आकार असतो आणि त्या नोटेच्या आकारात त्याची स्वप्नं, अपेक्षा दडलेल्या असतात. ज्या कधीच पुऱ्या होत

नसतात. या स्वप्न आणि अपेक्षांसाठीच फिरणं हा आजच्या माणसाच्या जगण्याचा आकार आहे हे आकलन ही कविता देते. सर्वसामान्य माणसाचा जीवनाचा ध्यास, त्याचे कष्ट, कुटुंब सोडून किंवा वेळप्रसंगी पाठीवर टाकून वणवण फिरणं हे सर्वच एक घर मिळविण्यासाठी असतं. परंतु कवी म्हणतो,

दोन हातांना किंवा दोन पायांना
पाहिजेच असतं एक घर खरंतर
जे सुटून जातो बार बार आपल्या हातून
नि येतच नाही आपल्या हाती शेवटालोक
(२००७:१४)

पोटापाण्यासाठी बाहेर पडलेला सर्वसामान्य मनुष्य गाव, घर सतत बदलत राहतो. जुन्या घराला हात जोडून नव्या घरात प्रवेश करतो. परंतु या हात जोडण्यातून, हाताला हात किंवा पैशाला पैसा जोडून सुद्धा त्याचं घर होईलच याची शाश्वती नसते. परंतु घर बनवण्यासाठीच्या अनेक कथा मात्र सर्वसामान्य माणसांच्या जीवनात उभ्या राहतात. वर्तमानात असे अनेक आकार आपल्या समोरून घरंगळत चालले आहेत. सोबत असणाऱ्या गावाचा सतत बदलणारा आकार आणि न सापडलेल्या घराचा आकार हे कधीच हाताला लागत नाहीत आणि त्यासाठीची शोधयात्रा म्हणजे जगण्याचा आकार असा अर्थ पहिलीच कविता देते. मानवी जगण्यात सतत कशाचा ना कशाचा शोध सुरू असतो आदिम कालापासून सुरू असलेल्या अस्तित्व विषयक शोधयात्रेचे एक मिथक बनून समोर येते. अशा अनेक बदलत्या आकारांच्या कविता म्हणजे मंगेश नारायणराव काळ्यांची कविता आहे.

लाकूडतोड्याची कथा-

'परंपरा' या कवितेतील लाकूडतोड्याच्या गोष्टीची विरचना विशेष उल्लेखनीय आहे. देवानं बक्षिसी दिलेल्या तिन्ही कुऱ्हाडी घेऊन घरी परतणारा लाकूडतोड्या हा लाकूडतोड्या नसतोच मुळी तो नुसता लाकूडतोड्याचा आकार असतो असे कवी म्हणतो. तेव्हा माणसातल्या सरळ, साध्या, प्रामाणिक, श्रद्धाळू वृत्ती चंगळ वादाने बदलून टाकल्या आहेत आणि त्याचे रूपांतर हेवा, मत्सर या वृत्तींत केले आहे. आजच्या भांडवलशाही आणि स्पर्धेच्या युगात कष्ट व कामा प्रतीची श्रद्धा यामागे असणारी स्पर्धा वृत्ती अधिक प्रभावी ठरत आहे. सर्वसामान्य मनुष्याच्या जगण्याचा आकार हा कष्टाळूपणाचा आणि प्रामाणिकपणाचा कितीही असला तरी त्या मागची स्पर्धा वृत्ती आणि मतलबीपणा झाकता येत नाही. ती त्याच्या जगण्याची गरज देखील आहे. मानवी मूल्यांच्या ऐवजी जगण्याच्या गरजा आक्रमक ठरत आहेत असा हा मानवी जीवनाचा समकालातील एक आकार आहे. हेच कवी लाकूडतोड्याच्या आकारातून स्पष्ट करतो. लाकूडतोड्याची गोष्ट परंपरेतून बाहेर पडून नव्या वास्तवात नव्याने घडते आहे. अशा अनेक गोष्टींची निर्मिती हे काळ्यांच्या कवीवृत्तीचे विशेष आहे.

खांडववनाची गोष्ट-

लाकूडतोड्याच्या गोष्टी प्रमाणेच खांडववनाची गोष्ट विरचित होते. एका विचाराच्या आसपास अनेक छोटे विचार असतात, ते विचार या काळात स्वतंत्रपणे समोर येऊ पाहत आहेत. जागतिकीकरणाने बहाल केलेल्या स्वातंत्र्य प्रेरणेतून हे विरचन होते. कवी 'खांडववन म्हटलं तर जाळण्याचीच गोष्ट असते' असं म्हणून पुढे म्हणतो,

जळून खाक झाल्या झाडांची पानांची फुलांची माणसांची (२००७:२१)

प्रस्थापित ठरू पाहणाऱ्या वर्गाने भूतकाळातील काय काय जाळले आहे याची कथा म्हणजे खांडवन जाळण्याची कथा होय. परंतु इतिहासातील या घटनेने जाळण्याची वृत्ती मात्र वर्तमानाला अनुवंशाप्रमाणे दिलेली आहे. कवी भूतकाळातील खांडववन जाळण्याच्या कथेचा सांधा समकालातील आगगाडीच्या स्टेशनवर थांबलेल्या बोगीत पाच पन्नास माणसं आणि स्त्रिया किंवा लहान मुलं आरक्षित अनारक्षित खरपूस भाजून निघतात या घटनेशी जोडलेला आहे. प्रस्थापितांनी नेहमीच अशिक्षित, गरीब, वंचित लोकांना कस्पटासमान समजून त्यांचा बिमोड केलेला आहे. बोगीत जळणारा कामगार वर्ग हा देखील आजच्या अर्थव्यवस्थेचा कणा आहे. ही घटना खांडववनात एकेकाळी सत्ता गाजवणाऱ्या नागवंशाचा निर्वंश व्हावा

अशी आहे. आजच्या खांडवन जळण्याच्या कथेत आडव पशुपक्षी कृमी कीटक अगदी नाग नसले तरी ही दुर्लक्षित वंचित माणसं आहेत हे उपरोधिकपणे कवी या विरचित कथेतून ठळक करतो.

आत्महत्या-

कवी 'आत्महत्या' या शब्दाला प्रतिशब्द निरक्षर असा आहे. या शब्दाची व्याप्ती होऊन आत्महत्या हा शब्द आता शेतकरी असाही लिहिता येतो असे कवी म्हणतो तेव्हा मराठवाड्यातील दुष्काळाच्या आणि सरकारी अनास्थेच्या कथा नजरेसमोर येतात. मानवी जगण्याचा बहुतांश भाग आत्महत्येच्या अशा अनेक कारणांनी व्यापलेला आहे. त्यातून क्रूर हिंसक निष्ठूर अन्यायी पक्षपाती अशी एक व्यवस्था मानवी जगण्यावर आक्रमण करते आहे जिच्यामुळे अशिक्षित, अडाणी, वंचित, दुर्लक्षित जनतेला आत्महत्ये शिवाय पर्याय उरलेला नाही. असे एक दुर्दैवी लोक विघातक राजकारण आणि संसदीय व्यवस्था देखील समोर येते. ही नकारात्मक वृत्ती काळाच्या अंगात मुरत चालल्याचे अधोरेखित होते. व्यवस्था आणि माणूस यांच्यातील बिघडलेल्या संबंधाचं हे समीकरण आहे. जे नियम बनतं आहे. माणसाची माणूसपणापासून नाळ तोडायला लावणाऱ्या या कथा आहेत. हा काळ गरीब, अशिक्षित, वंचितांसाठीचा नाही हे नव्वदनंतरच्या कवितेचं एक सूत्र आहे.

इमारत -

'ही इमारत पाडली गेली नसून' या कवितेमध्ये बहिणाबाईंनी भक्तीपरंपरेतील संतांच्या कार्याचं रचलेलं इमारतीचं रूपक आठवतं. काळयांनी या कवितेत हे परंपरा आणि संस्कृती बांधणीचं रूपक म्हणून वापरलेलं आहे. काळे 'ही इमारत पाडली गेली नसून ढासळलीय कालौघात' असे जेव्हा म्हणतात तेव्हा यंत्र व तंत्र युगात जुन्या परंपरांचा पाया आणि संस्कृती विषयक धारणा बदलत चालल्या आहेत किंबहुना त्या बदलणे हे नव्या काळाला स्वीकारण्यासाठी आवश्यक आहे असे एक आकलन समोर येते. जिथे पूर्वी घोड्यांच्या पागा किंवा रंगमहाल होता तिथे आता शाळा किंवा कचेरी आहेत. खलबतखाण्याच्या ऐवजी तिथे आता स्टॉक एक्सचेंज किंवा तालीमखाण्याच्या जागी आधुनिक मॉल अशा इमारती दिसू लागतील. हा केवळ इमारतींमधील बदल नसून ही एका नवीन जगाची नांदी आहे जो जुन्या इमारतीचा जिर्णोद्धार देखील असू शकतो असे कवी म्हणतो. आपल्या संस्कृतीपासून नाळ तुटण्याचा जीर्णोद्धार या कथेत सामावला आहे.

सुखी माणसाचा सदरा-

सुखी माणसाचा सदरा ही सर्वसामान्यांच्या जगण्यातील एक मिथ आहे. हा सतरा घालून कोणालाही सुखी अथवा दुःखी होता येत नाही हे कवी 'दुःखी माणूस' या कवितेत सांगतो. मनुष्याने परिधान केलेल्या सदऱ्यावरून माणसाला ओळखता येत नाही तर त्यासाठी माणसाने माणसाच्या जवळ येण्याची गरज आहे हे कवी येथे अधोरेखित करतो. आजच्या माणसाचे माणसापासून तुटलेले नाते हे नाळ तुटण्याच्या कथांमध्ये समाविष्ट आहे. सुखी माणसाचा सदरा हा एक मुखवटा आहे. नाहीतर माणसाच्या चेहऱ्यावरचा उडालेला असतो पारा आणि अशा पारा उडालेल्या काचेतून सामनेवाल्याच्या चेहऱ्याचे उडालेले रंग नि विस्कटलेली त्वचेची विण पाहता येत नाही हे वास्तव कवी नोंदवतो. अशा विस्कटलेल्या सर्वसामान्य माणसांच्या अनेक कथा मुखवट्याआड लपलेल्या आहेत त्या मुखवट्यांना काढून कवी वास्तव स्वीकारावयास लावतो.

पाणी -

पाण्याच्या रूपाने नैसर्गिक साधन संपत्तीतील समृद्धतेशी माणसाच्या माणूसपणाची जोडलेली नाळ कशी तुटते आहे आणि त्याच्या अपभ्रंशाचं स्वरूप कसं आहे हे कवी मांडतो. पाणी हे समृद्धता आणि शांतीचं प्रतीक. परंतु पाणी हा शब्द गावातून, नदीतून, विहिरीतून, माठातून सुद्धा गहाळ झाला आहे. या सेन्च्युरित कुणालाच गहाळ झालेल्या पाण्याचं अद्याक्षर लिहिताच येत नाही. गाव व माणूस आणि प्राणी व जंगल, माणूस व प्राणी, गाव व जंगल यांच्यातील सीमारेषा धूसर होणं हा समकालाच्या जगण्याचा आकार बनून समोर येतो. गाव, जंगल, प्राणी व माणसातलं माणूसपण यांच्याशी जोडलेल्या समृद्ध नात्याची नाळच तुटत चालली आहे हे या कथा सांगतात. या कथा व्यवस्था अथवा माणूस यापैकी कशाला जबाबदार धरत नाहीत तर त्या त्यापासून नाळ तुटण्याच्या आहेत.

'हरवला आहे'-

'हरवला आहे' ही कविता हरवला असणाऱ्याच्या निमित्ताने अशा अनेक हरवल्या गोष्टींची कथा रचते. हरवलेल्यातून इतिहास घडत असतो. ज्याकडे आपण उत्सुकतेने पाहतो, रंगवतो. वैषम्यही असतं हरवलेल्याच्या डोळ्यात तसं वैषम्य इतिहासाचं पुनरावलोकन केल्यानंतर दिसू लागतं. हरवलेल्या गोष्टींचा इतिहास या अर्थाने या कवितेकडे पाहू लागतो तेव्हा 'जो हरवतो तोच उभा अस्तो हरवला आहेच्या पोस्टर समोर साक्षात' ही ओळ थक्क करते. पुनरावृत्त होणारा इतिहास या ओळीतून भेटतो. ज्याच्या अन्यायाचं सातत्य कवी अनेक कथांतून मांडतो. आजचा काळही कधीही हरवून इतिहास बनण्याच्या शक्यतेत उभा आहे. किंवा इतिहास पुनरावृत्त झालेल्या वर्तमानात आपण इतिहासात हरवलेले कोणी बनून उभे आहोत. समग्र इतिहासावर 'हरवला आहे'ची लिहिलेली जाहिरात दिसत नाही ज्याला असा वर्तमान इतिहासाचे भान न बाळगता दंभ मिरवतो. इतिहासापासून तुटलेली नाळ वर्तमानाचा अपभ्रंश करते. त्याविषयीचे अज्ञान पुनरावलोकन न करता इतिहासाच्या पुनरावृत्तीला वाव देत असते. वर्तमानाचा अन्वयार्थ लावणाऱ्या या कथा आहेत.

समारोप-

प्रत्येकाच्या स्वप्नातील घर, सुखी माणसाचा सदरा, पाण्याची गरज, हरवला आहे ची जाहिरात, संकटकालीन खिडकी या आपल्या जीवनशैलीत सामावलेल्या गोष्टी आहेत. ज्यांच्या वर्षानुवर्षांच्या सर्वसामान्यपणे जगण्याच्या प्रक्रियेत कथा बनलेल्या आहेत. या कथांमधील माणूसपण, मूल्य, संस्कृती, नैसर्गिक साधन संपत्ती हे घटक मानवाची त्याच्या असतेपणाशी व भवतालाशी नाळ जोडून ठेवणारे असते. नाळ तुटण्याच्या कथांमध्ये या सर्वांपासून तुटलेला सहसंबंध समाविष्ट आहे. ही नाळ तुटून माणूस एक यंत्र एक माध्यम बनला आहे. आदीम काळापासूनच मनुष्य एक माध्यम म्हणून वापरला गेलेला आहे. या काळातील त्याचे रूप हे भूतकाळापेक्षा वेगळे आहे. मानवी जगण्याचे बदललेले रूप जगण्याचे नवे आकार घेऊन येणारे आहे. हे आकार सकारात्मक व नकारात्मक अशा दोन्ही स्वरूपातील आहेत. त्या आकारांच्या या कथांतील सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक, राजकीय, ऐतिहासिक परिस्थितीचे नव्या रूपातील अवलोकन पुनर्विचाराची गरज निर्माण करते. नाळ तुटण्याने अपभ्रंश झालेल्या नव्या आकारांची मांडणी कवी 'अपभ्रंश' या भागात करतो. कवी माणसाची बाह्य जगापासून तुटलेली नाळ त्याला आत्मउन्नतीपासूनही रोखत असते हे स्पष्ट करतो. मूल्याधारित समाजरचना आजही अस्तित्वात आलेली नाही. काळे म्हणतात,

इतिहास साक्षीय
इथे नव्याने काहीच घडलेलं नाहीये
जिवंत आहे अजूनही शंबुकाचे प्रेत
या मातीतल्या कित्येक शतकांच्या कुशीत
नि इथेच फिरतोय थोटा एकलव्य भाकरीच्या शोधात (२००७:८६)

बाह्यवातावरण प्रतिकूल असलं तरी त्यासोबतची अंतराची नाळ जोडणे विकासासाठी आवश्यक असते. इतिहास आणि वर्तमानाचे पुनरावलोकन करून त्यातून मार्ग काढणाऱ्या, नव्या कथांची रचना करणारी त्यांची भूमिका नव्या काळाच्या जडणघडणीसाठी एक दृष्टी देणारी आहे.

संदर्भ साहित्य-

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माया संस्कृतीचे मिथक आणि वास्तव

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सारांश (Abstract)

प्रस्तुत शोधनिबंधामध्ये मध्य अमेरिकेतील प्राचीन 'माया संस्कृती'शी निगडित असलेले समज-गैरसमज आणि ऐतिहासिक वास्तव यांचे चिकित्सक विश्लेषण करण्यात आले आहे. माया संस्कृती ही तिच्या प्रगत खगोलशास्त्र, गणित, स्थापत्यशास्त्र आणि चित्रलिपीसाठी ओळखली जाते. मात्र, जागतिक स्तरावर या संस्कृतीबद्दल अनेक दंतकथा (Myths) प्रचलित आहेत; उदा. '२०१२ मधील जगाचा अंत', मानवी बळींचे अवास्तव चित्रण आणि या संस्कृतीचे अचानक झालेले अनाकलनीय विलोपन. हा शोधनिबंध पुरातत्वशास्त्रीय पुरावे आणि आधुनिक संशोधनाच्या आधारे या दंतकथांचे खंडन करतो. वास्तव असे आहे की, माया संस्कृतीचे पतन हे कोणत्याही चमत्काराने नव्हे, तर पर्यावरणाचा ऱ्हास, दीर्घकालीन दुष्काळ आणि राजकीय अस्थिरता यांमुळे झाले होते. तसेच, माया लोकांची कालगणना (Calendar) जगाचा अंत नव्हे, तर एका नवीन युगाची सुरुवात दर्शवत होती. हा शोधनिबंध माया संस्कृतीच्या समृद्ध वारशाचे आणि त्यांच्या वास्तववादी जीवनपद्धतीचे पुनर्मूल्यांकन करण्याचा प्रयत्न करतो. माया संस्कृती पूर्णपणे नष्ट झाली नसून ती आजही अस्तित्वात आहे, हे सिद्ध करणे हा या शोधनिबंधाचा मुख्य उद्देश आहे.

सांकेतिक शब्द (Keywords) : *माया संस्कृती (Maya Civilization), मेसोअमेरिका (Mesoamerica), माया कॅलेंडर (Maya Calendar) खगोलशास्त्र (Astronomy), पुरातत्वशास्त्र (Archaeology), कल्पित कथा विरुद्ध वास्तव (Myth vs. Reality)*

प्रस्तावना (Introduction)

माया संस्कृती ही मानवी इतिहासातील सर्वात गूढ आणि प्रगत संस्कृतींपैकी एक मानली जाते. इसवी सन पूर्व १५०० ते इसवी सन ९०० या काळात ही संस्कृती मेक्सिको, ग्वाटेमाला आणि बेलीज या भागात बहरली. माया लोकांचे पिरॅमिड, त्यांची लेखनकला आणि शून्याचा वापर जगाला थक्क करणारा आहे. परंतु, पॉप संस्कृती आणि हॉलीवूड चित्रपटांमुळे या संस्कृतीबद्दल अनेक चुकीचे समज (Myths) पसरले आहेत. या शोधनिबंधात आपण अशाच काही कल्पित कथांचे खंडन करून वास्तव जाणून घेणार आहोत.

संशोधनाची प्रमुख उद्दिष्टे (Research Objectives)

१. 'अचानक गायब' होण्याच्या सिद्धांताचे खंडन करणे

माया लोक अचानक नाहीसे झाले हा सर्वात मोठा गैरसमज आहे. संशोधनाचे मुख्य उद्दिष्ट हे सिद्ध करणे आहे की, ही संस्कृती पूर्णपणे नष्ट झाली नव्हती, तर लोकांनी केवळ शहरे सोडून (स्थलांतर करून) ग्रामीण भागात किंवा उत्तरेकडे वस्ती केली.

२. पर्यावरणीय आणि हवामान बदलांचा प्रभाव तपासणे

माया संस्कृतीच्या ऱ्हासासाठी कारणीभूत ठरलेल्या 'मेगा-दुष्काळ' (Mega-droughts) आणि जंगलतोडीचा अभ्यास करणे. आधुनिक विज्ञानाच्या मदतीने (उदा. मातीचे नमुने आणि तलावांमधील गाळ) त्या काळातील हवामानाचा अचूक मागोवा घेणे.

३. 'लॉस्ट सिटीज'चा शोध घेणे (LiDAR तंत्रज्ञान)

दाट जंगलाखाली दबलेली शहरे शोधणे. लेझर तंत्रज्ञानाचा (LiDAR) वापर करून माया संस्कृतीचा विस्तार आपण समजतो त्यापेक्षा कितीतरी मोठा होता, हे पुराव्यानिशी सिद्ध करणे.

संशोधन पद्धती (Research Method)

माया संस्कृतीचे रहस्य उलगडण्यासाठी संशोधक खालील वैज्ञानिक पद्धतींचा वापर करतात:

अ) लिडार तंत्रज्ञान (LiDAR - Light Detection and Ranging)

हे सर्वात आधुनिक तंत्रज्ञान आहे. यात विमानाद्वारे जमिनीवर लेझर किरण सोडले जातात. यामुळे घनदाट जंगलाच्या खाली लपलेली शहरे, रस्ते आणि पिरॅमिड्स स्पष्टपणे दिसतात. अलीकडेच या तंत्रज्ञानामुळे हजारो नवीन माया वास्तूंचा शोध लागला आहे.

ब) एपिग्राफी (Epigraphy - शिलालेख अभ्यास)

माया लोकांची स्वतःची चित्रलिपी होती. या लिपीचा अर्थ लावून (Decoding) संशोधक त्या काळातील राजांचा इतिहास, युद्धे आणि धार्मिक श्रद्धांची माहिती मिळवतात.

क) कार्बन डेटिंग (Carbon-14 Dating)

उत्खननात सापडलेली हाडे, लाकूड किंवा कोळसा यांच्या आधारे ती वस्तू किती हजार वर्षे जुनी आहे, हे या पद्धतीमुळे अचूकपणे समजते.

ड) आयसोटोप विश्लेषण (Isotope Analysis)

सापडलेल्या सांगाड्यांच्या दातांची आणि हाडांची तपासणी करून ते लोक काय खायचे आणि ते नेमके कुठून स्थलांतरित झाले होते, याचा अभ्यास केला जातो.

संशोधनातील आव्हाने (Research challenges)

माया संस्कृतीचे संशोधन करणे कठीण आहे कारण त्यांची बहुतांश शहरे दाट विषुववृत्तीय जंगलात (Rainforests) गाडली गेली आहेत. तसेच, स्पॅनिश आक्रमणादरम्यान त्यांचे अनेक मौल्यवान ग्रंथ जाळून टाकण्यात आले, ज्यामुळे ऐतिहासिक माहितीची कमतरता भासते.

विषय विवेचन (Core Part: Myth vs. Reality)

माया संस्कृतीबद्दलचे 'भ्रम' (Myths) आणि 'वास्तव' (Reality) यांचा खोलवर अभ्यास केला तर लक्षात येते की ही संस्कृती आपण समजतो त्यापेक्षा कितीतरी अधिक प्रगत आणि गुंतागुंतीची होती.

माया संस्कृतीच्या गाभ्याशी (Core) संबंधित काही महत्त्वाचे मुद्दे खालीलप्रमाणे आहेत:

१. माया कॅलेंडर आणि जगाचा अंत (The Doomsday Myth)

भ्रम: अनेकांचा असा समज होता की २१ डिसेंबर २०१२ रोजी माया कॅलेंडर संपले आणि तेव्हाच जगाचा अंत होणार होता.

वास्तव: माया लोकांकडे कालमापनाची अत्यंत प्रगत पद्धत होती ज्याला 'लॉन्ग काउंट' (Long Count) कॅलेंडर म्हणतात. २०१२ मध्ये केवळ त्यांचे एक मोठे कालचक्र (ज्याला 'बाकतून' म्हणतात) पूर्ण झाले होते. जसे आपले कॅलेंडर ३१ डिसेंबरला संपून १ जानेवारीला पुन्हा सुरू होते, तसेच त्यांच्यासाठी तो एका नव्या युगाचा प्रारंभ होता.

२. शहरांचा अचानक ऱ्हास (The "Disappearance" Myth)

भ्रम: माया लोक अचानक जंगलात गायब झाले किंवा त्यांचा पूर्णपणे नायनाट झाला.

वास्तव: माया संस्कृतीचे केवळ 'राजकीय केंद्र' आणि मोठी शहरे (उदा. टिकाळ, कोपान) ओसाड झाली. याचे मुख्य कारण भीषण दुष्काळ, पर्यावरणाचा ऱ्हास आणि अंतर्गत युद्धे हे होते. लोक मेलं नाहीत, तर ते लहान गटांमध्ये विभागले गेले आणि उत्तरेकडे स्थलांतरित झाले. आजही मेक्सिको आणि ग्वाटेमालामध्ये माया वंशज त्यांची संस्कृती जपून आहेत.

३. तंत्रज्ञान आणि एलियन्स (Technological Myth)

भ्रम: माया लोकांकडे पिरॅमिड्स बांधण्यासाठी आधुनिक यंत्रे नव्हती, त्यामुळे त्यांना एलियन्सनी मदत केली असावी.

वास्तव: माया लोक विज्ञानात प्रचंड प्रगत होते. त्यांनी शून्याचा (Zero) शोध लावला होता आणि खगोलशास्त्रात त्यांना कमालीची गती होती. त्यांनी पिरॅमिड्स बांधण्यासाठी 'चुना' (Lime plaster) आणि मानवी श्रमाचा वापर केला. त्यांचे स्थापत्यशास्त्र हे निव्वळ गणितावर आधारित होते, कोणत्याही परग्रहीय शक्तीवर नाही.

४. माया संस्कृतीचा गाभा

माया संस्कृतीच्या अस्तित्वाचे तीन मुख्य आधारस्तंभ होते:

अ) मका (Maize) आणि जीवनचक्र

माया संस्कृतीसाठी मका हे केवळ अन्न नव्हते, तर तो एक देव होता. त्यांच्या श्रद्धेनुसार, देवाने माणसाला मक्याच्या पिठापासून बनवले आहे. त्यामुळे शेती आणि निसर्ग त्यांच्या जीवनाचा केंद्रबिंदू होता.

ब) रक्ताचे अर्पण (Bloodletting)

आपल्याला हे हिंसक वाटू शकते, पण माया लोकांसाठी रक्ताचे अर्पण करणे ही अत्यंत पवित्र गोष्ट होती. राजा आणि राणी स्वतःचे रक्त अर्पण करून देवाशी संवाद साधतात, अशी त्यांची धारणा होती. हे विश्वाचे संतुलन राखण्यासाठी आवश्यक मानले जाई.

क) प्रगत लेखनकला

माया ही मेसोअमेरिकेतील एकमेव संस्कृती होती जिच्याकडे पूर्णपणे विकसित लेखनकला होती. त्यांनी हजारो पुस्तके (Codices) लिहिली होती, पण दुर्दैवाने स्पॅनिश आक्रमकांनी त्यातील बहुतांश पुस्तके जाळून टाकली.

माया संस्कृतीचे प्रमुख वैशिष्टे

अ) खगोलशास्त्र (Astronomy) : माया संस्कृतीतील खगोलशास्त्र (Astronomy) हे त्या काळातील जगातील सर्वात प्रगत विज्ञानांपैकी एक मानले जाते. दुर्बिणीसारखी कोणतीही आधुनिक साधने नसतानाही त्यांनी ताऱ्यांच्या आणि ग्रहांच्या हालचालींचे जे अचूक गणित मांडले, ते आजही वैज्ञानिकांना थक्क करते.

माया खगोलशास्त्रातील मुख्य पैलू खालीलप्रमाणे आहेत:

१. आकाशाचे निरीक्षण (Observing the Sky)

माया लोक आकाशाला देवांचे निवासस्थान मानत असत. त्यांचे खगोलशास्त्रीय ज्ञान केवळ कुतूहल नसून त्यांच्या शेती, धर्म आणि युद्धाच्या नियोजनाचा आधार होता. त्यांनी खगोलशास्त्रीय निरीक्षणासाठी खास वास्तू बांधल्या होत्या. मेक्सिकोमधील 'एल काराकोल' (El Caracol) ही त्यांची प्रसिद्ध वेधशाळा आहे. या इमारतीच्या खिडक्या अशा प्रकारे बनवल्या होत्या की त्यातून विशिष्ट दिवशी शुक्र ग्रह किंवा चंद्राचे दर्शन व्हायचे.

२. शुक्र ग्रहाचा अभ्यास (Venus Cycles)

माया लोकांसाठी शुक्र (Venus) हा सर्वात महत्त्वाचा ग्रह होता. त्यांनी शुक्राच्या हालचालींचा इतका अचूक अभ्यास केला होता की, त्यांचा हिशोब आणि आधुनिक विज्ञानाचा हिशोब यात केवळ काही मिनिटांचा फरक पडतो.ते शुक्राला 'युद्ध आणि पुनर्जन्माचा देव' मानत. शुक्राच्या स्थितीनुसार ते युद्धाचे मुहूर्त ठरवत असत.

३. माया कॅलेंडर (Maya Calender)

खगोलशास्त्राच्या जोरावर त्यांनी तीन मुख्य कॅलेंडर्स तयार केली होती.

I) त्झोल्किन (Tzolkin): २६० दिवसांचे धार्मिक कॅलेंडर.

II) हाब (Haab): ३६५ दिवसांचे सौर कॅलेंडर, जे शेतीसाठी वापरले जाई.

III) लॉन्ग काउंट (Long Count): हजारो वर्षांचा काळ मोजण्यासाठी वापरले जाणारे कॅलेंडर.

४. सूर्यग्रहण आणि चंद्रग्रहण (Eclipses)

माया शास्त्रज्ञांना ग्रहण कधी होणार, याचे अचूक भाकीत वर्तवता येत होते. त्यांच्या 'ड्रेसडेन कोडिक्स' (Dresden Codex) नावाच्या हस्तलिखितात ग्रहणांच्या तारखांचे तक्ते सापडले आहेत. ग्रहण ही त्यांच्यासाठी एक गंभीर घटना असे, ज्यावेळी ते विशेष विधी करत असत.

५. तंतोतंत अचूकता (Mathematical Precision)

माया लोकांनी पृथ्वीचा सूर्याभोवतीचा प्रदक्षिणा काळ ३६५.२४२० दिवस इतका मोजला होता. आधुनिक विज्ञानानुसार हा काळ ३६५.२४२२ दिवस आहे. हजारो वर्षांपूर्वी कोणतीही आधुनिक यंत्रे नसताना इतकी अचूकता गाठणे हे खरोखरच अद्भूत आहे.

ब) गणित (Mathematics) : माया संस्कृतीतील गणित हे त्यांच्या काळातील सर्वात प्रगत आणि वैशिष्ट्यपूर्ण गणितांपैकी एक मानले जाते. माया लोकांनी केवळ व्यापार किंवा शेतीसाठीच नव्हे, तर खगोलशास्त्र आणि वास्तुकलेसाठी गणिताचा वापर केला होता.

माया गणिताची मुख्य वैशिष्ट्ये खालीलप्रमाणे आहेत:

१. शून्याचा शोध (The Concept of Zero)

माया संस्कृती ही जगातील अशा मोजक्या संस्कृतींपैकी एक होती ज्यांनी 'शून्य' (Zero) ही संकल्पना स्वतंत्रपणे विकसित केली होती. त्यांच्या गणिती पद्धतीत शून्यासाठी एका शंखासारख्या (Shell) चिन्हाचा वापर केला जाई. शून्यामुळे त्यांना मोठ्या संख्यांची गणना करणे आणि स्थानमूल्य (Place value) ठरवणे सोपे झाले.

२. विगेसिमल पद्धत (Vigesimal System - Base 20)

आपण आज 'दशमान पद्धत' (Base 10) वापरतो, जी १० वर आधारित आहे. मात्र, माया लोकांची पद्धत २० वर आधारित होती.असे मानले जाते की त्यांनी हाताची १० बोटे आणि पायाची १० बोटे मिळून २० ही संख्या आधार म्हणून निवडली होती.

३. संख्या लिहिण्याची पद्धत (Numerals) माया लोकांनी संख्या लिहिण्यासाठी केवळ तीन चिन्हांचा वापर केला:

ठिपका (Dot): १ या संख्येसाठी.

आडवी रेघ (Bar): ५ या संख्येसाठी.

शंख (Shell): ० (शून्य) साठी.

उदाहरण: जर त्यांना ७ लिहायचे असेल, तर ते एक आडवी रेघ (५) आणि त्यावर दोन ठिपके (१+१) काढत असत.

जर १९ लिहायचे असेल, तर तीन आडव्या रेघा (५+५+५) आणि त्यावर चार ठिपके (१+१+१+१).

४. स्थानमूल्य आणि उभी मांडणी (Place Value)

माया लोक संख्या लिहिताना त्या खालून वर (Vertical) लिहीत असत. सर्वात खालचा स्तर 'एक' (Units) दर्शवत असे.

त्याच्या वरचा स्तर '२०' पटीने वाढत असे (उदा. १, २०, ४००, ८००० इ.).या पद्धतीमुळे ते लाखो-करोडोंच्या संख्या अगदी सहजपणे मांडू शकत होते.

५. खगोलशास्त्रीय गणिते

माया गणितज्ञांनी गणिताचा वापर करून ग्रहांच्या भ्रमणकाळाची अचूक गणना केली होती. त्यांनी वर्षाचे दिवस ३६५ असतात हे कोणत्याही दुर्बिणीशिवाय केवळ गणिताच्या जोरावर शोधले होते. त्यांच्या पिरॅमिड्सच्या रचनेतही (उदा. पायऱ्यांची संख्या) गणिताचा अचूक वापर दिसतो.

क) वास्तुकला (Architecture): माया संस्कृतीतील वास्तुकला ही मानवी इतिहासातील एक आश्चर्य मानली जाते. घनदाट जंगलांच्या मध्यभागी, कोणतीही आधुनिक यंत्रे, लोखंडी अवजारे किंवा चाकांचा वापर न करता त्यांनी उभारलेले भव्य पिरॅमिड्स आणि शहरे आजही शास्त्रज्ञांना थक्क करतात.

माया वास्तुकलेची मुख्य वैशिष्ट्ये खालीलप्रमाणे आहेत:

१. भव्य पिरॅमिड्स (Step Pyramids) : माया संस्कृतीची सर्वात ओळखणारी खूण म्हणजे त्यांचे 'पायऱ्यांचे पिरॅमिड्स'. हे पिरॅमिड्स इजिप्तच्या पिरॅमिड्ससारखे टोकदार नसून वरच्या बाजूला सपाट असत.या सपाट भागावर देवाची मंदिरे बांधलेली असत.उदाहरण: चिचेन इत्झा येथील 'एल कॅस्टिलो' आणि टिकाळमधील 'टेंपल ऑफ द जायंट जॅग्वार'.

२. कोर्बल्ड आर्च (Corbelled Arch): माया लोकांनी खऱ्या कमानीऐवजी (True Arch) 'कोर्बल्ड आर्च'चा वापर केला. यात दगडांचा एक थर दुसऱ्या थरावर थोडा बाहेर काढून त्रिकोणी छप्पर तयार केले जाई. यामुळे त्यांच्या इमारतींना एक विशिष्ट आणि मजबूत आकार मिळत असे.

३. साकबे (Sacbe) - पांढरे रस्ते : माया लोकांनी शहरांना जोडण्यासाठी चुनखडीपासून बनवलेले पक्के रस्ते तयार केले होते, ज्यांना 'साकबे' म्हटले जाई. हे रस्ते रात्रीच्या वेळी चंद्राच्या प्रकाशात चमकत असत, ज्यामुळे प्रवाशांना दिशा समजणे सोपे जाई.

४. बॉल कोर्ट्स (Ball Courts) : जवळपास प्रत्येक माया शहरात एक मोठे मैदान असे, जिथे 'पोक-ता-पोक' हा खेळ खेळला जाई. या मैदानाच्या दोन्ही बाजूंना उंच भिंती आणि मध्यभागी दगडाची रिंग असे. हे केवळ खेळाचे मैदान नसून ते त्यांच्या धार्मिक विधींचे केंद्र होते.

५. खगोलशास्त्रीय संरेखन (Astronomical Alignment) : माया वास्तूंची रचना अंधश्रद्धेवर नसून विज्ञानावर आधारित होती.त्यांच्या इमारतींच्या खिडक्या आणि दरवाजे सूर्य, चंद्र आणि शुक्र ग्रहांच्या विशिष्ट स्थितीनुसार बनवले जात.वर्षातील विशिष्ट दिवशी (उदा. विषुववृत्त) सूर्याचा प्रकाश पिरॅमिडच्या पायऱ्यांवर अशा प्रकारे पडतो की जणू एखादा साप खाली उतरत आहे.

६. साहित्याचा वापर : त्यांनी प्रामुख्याने चुनखडीचा (Limestone) वापर केला, जो स्थानिक पातळीवर मोठ्या प्रमाणात उपलब्ध होता.

दगडांना जोडण्यासाठी त्यांनी चुनखडीपासून बनवलेला विशेष सिमेंट/गारा (Stucco) वापरला.इमारतींच्या भिंतींवर अतिशय सुंदर कोरीव काम (Hieroglyphs) आणि चित्रकला केलेली असे.

ड) प्रमुख माया शहरे आणि त्यांची वैशिष्ट्ये

माया संस्कृती ही एका साम्राज्याखाली नसून अनेक स्वतंत्र शहर-राज्यांमध्ये (City-States) विभागलेली होती. ही शहरे त्यांच्या भव्य पिरॅमिड्स, राजवाडे आणि प्रगत नगररचनेसाठी ओळखली जातात.खाली माया संस्कृतीतील काही सर्वात महत्त्वाची आणि भव्य शहरे दिली आहेत:

१. चिचेन इत्झा (Chichen Itza) - हे माया संस्कृतीतील सर्वात प्रसिद्ध शहर आहे.वैशिष्ट्य: येथे 'एल कॅस्टिलो' हा प्रसिद्ध पिरॅमिड आहे.हे शहर व्यापाराचे आणि धार्मिक विधींचे मुख्य केंद्र होते.येथील 'पवित्र विहीर' (Cenote) आणि वेधशाळा पर्यटकांचे मुख्य आकर्षण आहे.

२. टिकाळ (Tikal) - हे माया संस्कृतीतील सर्वात मोठ्या आणि शक्तिशाली शहरांपैकी एक होते. हे शहर एका मोठ्या पावसाळी जंगलाच्या (Rainforest) मध्यभागी वसलेले आहे.येथे ६ भव्य पिरॅमिड्स आहेत, ज्यांची उंची ६० मीटरपेक्षा जास्त आहे. सुवर्णकाळात या शहराची लोकसंख्या अंदाजे १ लाखाच्या वर होती.

३. पालेंके (Palenque) - हे शहर त्याच्या सुंदर कोरीव कामासाठी आणि वास्तुकलेसाठी ओळखले जाते. येथील सर्वात महान राजा 'पाकल द ग्रेट' याची कबर एका भव्य मंदिराखाली (Temple of the Inscriptions) सापडली आहे.येथील मंदिरे आणि राजवाडे माया संस्कृतीतील सर्वात मोहक नमुने मानले जातात.

४. कोपान (Copan) - या शहराला माया संस्कृतीचे 'कला केंद्र' म्हटले जाते. येथे ६३ पायऱ्या असलेला एक जिना आहे,ज्यावर माया संस्कृतीचा संपूर्ण इतिहास चित्रलिपीत कोरलेला आहे.हे शहर त्यांच्या अचूक आणि सुंदर मूर्तिकलेसाठी प्रसिद्ध आहे.

५. उक्समल (Uxmal) - हे शहर 'पुएक' (Puuc) स्थापत्यशैलीचे उत्तम उदाहरण आहे. येथील मुख्य पिरॅमिडचा आकार अंडाकृती (Oval) आहे, जो इतर माया पिरॅमिड्सपेक्षा वेगळा आहे.येथील भिंतींवर पावसाचा देव 'चाक' (Chaac) याच्या अनेक प्रतिमा कोरलेल्या आहेत.

माया शहरांची नगररचना:

शहराच्या मध्यभागी नेहमी मुख्य पिरॅमिड, मंदिर आणि राजाचा राजवाडा असे.प्रत्येक शहरात खेळासाठी एक मोठे मैदान (Ball Court) असायचे. शहरांतर्गत आणि दोन शहरांना जोडण्यासाठी चुनखडीचे पांढरे रस्ते बांधलेले होते. जंगलात असूनही माया लोकांनी पावसाचे पाणी साठवण्यासाठी मोठे हौद (Chultuns) आणि कालवे तयार केले होते.

शिफारसी (Recommendations)

१. शिक्षण: शालेय पाठ्यपुस्तकांत माया संस्कृतीला केवळ 'गूढ' न ठरवता त्यांच्या वैज्ञानिक प्रगतीवर भर दिला जावा.

२. पर्यटन: माया ऐतिहासिक स्थळांना भेट देताना स्थानिक समुदायांच्या संस्कृतीचा आदर राखणे आवश्यक आहे.

३. पर्यावरण संरक्षण: माया संस्कृतीचा ऱ्हास पर्यावरणाच्या असंतुलनामुळे झाला, यातून आधुनिक जगाने धडा घेणे गरजेचे आहे.

निष्कर्ष (Conclusion)

माया संस्कृतीबद्दलचे बहुतेक समज हे विज्ञानापेक्षा कल्पनेवर अधिक आधारित आहेत. ते लोक गायब झाले नाहीत, तर त्यांनी बदलत्या काळानुसार स्वतःला जुळवून घेतले. त्यांचे पिरॅमिड आणि कॅलेंडर हे कोणा परग्रहावरील शक्तीचे नसून, मानवी जिद्द आणि निसर्गाशी असलेल्या त्यांच्या घट्ट नात्याचे प्रतीक आहेत. ८ व्या आणि ९ व्या शतकात माया शहरांचा जो ऱ्हास झाला, तो अचानक आलेले कोणतेही संकट नव्हते. उलट, पर्यावरणाचा ऱ्हास, सततचे दुष्काळ आणि राजकीय अस्थिरता यामुळे लोकांनी शहरे सोडून इतरत्र स्थलांतर केले.

त्यांनी शून्याचा (0) शोध लावला होता आणि ग्रहांच्या गतीचे अचूक गणित मांडले होते, जे त्या काळातील इतर कोणत्याही संस्कृतीपेक्षा प्रगत होते. आजही माया बोलीभाषा, त्यांची विणकाम कला आणि कृषी पद्धती जिवंत आहेत.
थोडक्यात सांगायचे तर, माया संस्कृती 'हरवलेली' नसून ती 'बदलेली' आहे. निसर्गाचा अतिवापर केल्यास प्रगत संस्कृतीवर काय परिणाम होऊ शकतो, याचा ती एक जिवंत धडा आहे.

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'युगान्त' मधील मिथक संकल्पना

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प्रस्तावना:-

'मिथक' म्हणजे एखाद्या गोष्टीविषयी परंपरागत मत तयार होऊन त्याचे ज्ञान पुढील पिढीला मिळताना एक विश्वसनीय मिथक तयार होते. मिथकांचा उगम भारतात फार प्राचीन काळापासून होत आहे. याच मिथकांचा साहित्यात अवलंब केल्याने ते प्रतीकात्मक अर्थ प्रकट करणारे ठरते. मिथके ही जेव्हा लेखन अस्तित्वात नव्हते तेव्हा ती मौखिक पद्धतीच्या आधारे निर्माण होऊन भाषेद्वारा प्रकट झाली होती. मिथकांचे अस्तित्व हे रामायण, महाभारत या महाकाव्यात, प्राचीन पुराण कथेत, प्राचीन संस्कृत, बौद्ध, जैन साहित्यात दिसते. मिथक हा शब्द 'Myth' या इंग्रजी शब्दासाठी वापरला जातो. मराठी संस्कृतीत त्याला पुराणकथा म्हणतात. प्राक्कथा, मिथ्यकथा, दैवकथा अशा विविध संज्ञांनी मिथकाला ओळखले जाते.

दि. के. बेडेकर यांनी मिथकाला 'दिव्यकथा' असे म्हटले आहे. तर विश्वनाथ खैरे यांनी 'मिथ्य' अशी संज्ञा वापरली आहे. श्रद्धेने विश्वास ठेवलेल्या समजुतींना किंवा विचारांना 'मिथके' असे संबोधले जाते. विजया राज्याध्यक्ष यांनी संपादित केलेल्या 'मराठी वाङमय कोश' (खंड चौथा) यामध्ये मिथकाची व्याख्या पुढीलप्रमाणे दिली आहे. "मिथक म्हणजे ऐतिहासिक घटीतांचे कथन करणारी गोष्ट होय." मिथकाचे कार्यच असे असते की, सर्जनशील काळ पुनर्प्रस्थापित करणे, जागृत करणे. मिथकामधून मानवी विचारांचा, संस्कृतीचा इतिहास प्रतिबिंबित होतो. सुरुवातीला पशुपक्षी, वृक्षवेली, तारे, आकाश, धरती यांचे अस्तित्व, जन्ममृत्यूचे गूढ, पाऊस, वादळे यांचे कारण अशा निसर्गाबद्दल पडणाऱ्या विविध प्रश्नांच्या उत्तरासाठी पुराणकथा जन्मल्याचे दिसते. मिथकाचा वापर साहित्यात केला जातो तेव्हा ते 'प्रतीक' म्हणून अस्तित्वात येते. 'कीचकवध' या नाटकांमध्ये सैरंध्री हे पात्र भारत मातेचे सूचन करते. तर ब्रिटिश राजवटीवर भाष्य करणारे कीचक हे पात्र लॉर्ड कर्झन साठी वापरले आहे. दुर्गा भागवत यांच्या मते, "मिथके साहित्यात येताना प्रतीक व रुपक या स्वरूपात येतात." मिथकाची रचना पद्धती आणि त्याचा मराठी साहित्यात वापर करून निर्माण झालेले साहित्य म्हणजे मिथक साहित्य असते. ज्यातून पौराणिक कथा आणि पात्रांच्या आधारे आधुनिक युगातील मानवाचे वर्तन, विचार यांना अधोरेखित केले जाते. त्यातून मानवी जीवनाचे प्रबोधन करता येते. इरावती कर्वे यांच्या 'युगांन्त' या कादंबरीच्या आधारे मिथकाची संकल्पना सदर लेखात मांडली आहे.

'युगान्त' मधील मिथके :-

लेखिका इरावती कर्वे यांनी १९६७ साली लिहिलेल्या 'युगान्त' या कादंबरीतून महाभारतातील व्यक्तिरेखांचे मानवी दृष्टिकोनातून विश्लेषण केले आहे. १९७२ सालचा 'साहित्यअकादमी पुरस्कार' या कादंबरीला प्राप्त झाला आहे. 'युगान्त' या कादंबरीत मांडलेली मिथके महाभारतातील महत्त्वपूर्ण पात्रांच्या अनुषंगाने सदर लेखात अभ्यासली आहेत. यामध्ये इरावती कर्वे यांनी भीष्म या पात्राचे वय, अनुभव, कार्य यांचा साहित्यात समावेश करून त्याद्वारा समाजात असे जीवन जगणाऱ्या माणसांचा स्वभाव, वर्तन यांना अधोरेखित केले आहे. भीष्म हे पात्र महाभारताच्या अध्यायातील एक महत्त्वपूर्ण पात्र असून अतिवृद्धपणी कौरवांच्या सेनेचे सेनापती पद स्वीकारून युद्धभूमीवर एक शेवटचे पर्व त्यांनी गाजवले. ज्याचे स्वतःचे स्वार्थ जीवन असे नसताना त्यांनी सर्व स्वार्थाचा त्याग करून आपले संपूर्ण आयुष्य कौरवांच्या कल्याणार्थ व्यतीत केले. गंगापुत्र भीष्म हा आजीवन ब्रह्मचारी राहीन अशा प्रतिज्ञामुळे तो आजीवन त्यागमय आयुष्य जगत राहिला. राज्य नाही, लग्न नाही, पण इच्छामरण लाभलेला भीष्म चित्रित करताना इरावती कर्वेंना आजच्या सामाजिक जीवनात असे अनेक भीष्म जन्माला आले असतील, ज्यांनी आपल्या कुळाचा उद्धार करण्याकरता आपला स्वार्थ बाजूला ठेवून त्यागमय, समर्पित जीवनाचा स्वीकार केला असेल असे सुचवायचे आहे. तसेच ज्यावेळी द्रौपदीचे वस्त्रहरण झाले त्यावेळी भीष्माला हा सर्व प्रकार थांबवता आला असता पण तो धर्म – अधर्म याची अधिक चर्चा करण्यात गुंतला. ज्या कुलात स्त्रियांची विटंबना होते त्याचा

लय निश्चित असतो. या न्यायाने आजही समाजात विनाशाच्या बुद्धीने वर्तन करणारे लोक दिसतात. त्यांचाही नाश होताना आपण पाहतो. हा नियम महाभारतातील भीष्म या मिथकामुळे अधिक प्रकर्षाने जाणवतो. भीष्माने स्वार्थ त्याग वृत्तीने जीवन जगले तरी आपल्या कुळाच्या उद्धारासाठी त्याने पाप कर्म केले असे प्रत्ययाला येते.

सदर कादंबरीत भीष्म, कुंती, द्रौपदी, कर्ण, कृष्ण या पात्रांचा आढावा घेऊन एका युगाचा अंत याचे चित्रण मानवी स्वभावांच्या छटातून केले आहे. ही भारतीय पौराणिक कथा आहे. या ग्रंथात गांधारी हे महाभारतातील महत्त्वाचे पात्र अधोरेखित करताना गांधारी हे मिथक वापरून आजच्या आधुनिक युगात महत्त्वाचे पण डोळ्यावर पट्टी बांधून न्याय समजून न घेणाऱ्या अनेक लोकांचे समाजभान या कादंबरीमध्ये अधोरेखित केले आहे. जेव्हा जन्मांध राजकुमाराशी राणी गांधारीचे लग्न होते तेव्हा तिने आपले डोळे बांधून घेतले व संसार करून शेवटपर्यंत आपल्या पतीसमवेत चांगले – वाईट यांचा विचार न करता सुख-दु:ख वाटून घेत जीवन जगली. आजच्या अनेक स्त्रिया अशा आहेत की ज्या अन्याय सहन करून आपल्या संसारासाठी ठामपणे उभ्या राहिलेल्या दिसतात. महाभारतातील स्त्रियांचे आयुष्य हे पराधीन असल्याचे दिसते. गांधारी, द्रौपदी, सुभद्रा, कुंती अशा पात्रातून पौराणिक कालखंडातील स्त्रियांचे जीवन आणि आजच्या युगातील स्त्रियांचे जीवन यामधील समानता अधोरेखित होते.

महाभारतातील कुंती हे पात्र मिथक स्वरूपात मांडताना कुंतीला सूर्यापासून मुलगा झाला व जन्मताच त्याला कवच कुंडले प्राप्त झाली. ही महाभारतातील एक अद्भुत गोष्ट असून त्याची संगती मानवी आयुष्यात अनेक गोष्टींसोबत लावता येत नाही. कारण ती कवच कुंडले कुठून आली ? सूर्यापासून पुत्रप्राप्ती कशी झाली ? अशा अनेक प्रश्नांची उत्तरे उपलब्ध होत नाहीत. तसेच सदरच्या कादंबरीत पिता -पुत्र संबंधाचे मिथक वापरून आजच्या युगातील पिता-पुत्रांच्या नातेसंबंधाचे सविस्तर विश्लेषण केले आहे. धृतराष्ट्र जरी दृष्टीने आंधळा होता तरी त्याचा सद्सदविवेक हा ईर्षेने नाहीसा झालेला दिसतो. त्यामुळे चुकीचे वर्तन करणाऱ्या आपल्या मुलांना म्हणजे कौरवांना तो साथ देताना दिसतो. महाभारतातील प्रत्येक व्यक्ती एका वेगळ्या संकटकाळी परिस्थितीशी लढत असलेली दिसते. आजच्या समाजात माणूस त्याचे कुटुंब आणि नातीगोती यांच्याशी वर्तन करताना जसा दिसतो तसे वर्तन या पौराणिक कथेचा एक अविभाज्य भाग असल्याचे दिसते. पौराणिक कथा आणि मिथके यांचा अन्योन्य संबंध असलेला दिसतो. या मिथकांचा प्रत्यय आजच्या २१ व्या शतकातही येतो.

'युगान्त' या कादंबरीतील द्रौपदी हे पात्र म्हणजे महाभारत घडण्याचे एक महत्त्वाचे पात्र मानले जाते. यज्ञकुंडातून आली म्हणून तेजस्वी, यज्ञसेन द्रुपदाची कन्या म्हणून द्रौपदी असे नाव असलेली द्रोपदी पांचालाची राजकन्या म्हणून पांचाली. हा 'युगांन्त' म्हणजे एका युगाचा अंत. यातील प्रत्येक यातना ही द्रौपदीने भोगली आहे. द्रोपदीमुळेच युद्धाला प्रारंभ झाला असे मानणाऱ्या निराधार कल्पनेला लेखिकेने तिलांजली दिलेली दिसते. त्या म्हणतात, "द्रौपदी युद्धाचे कारण... निदान मुख्य कारण तर खासच नव्हती. ज्या दिवशी आंधळया धृतराष्ट्राला तो थोरला मुलगा असतानाही त्याला वगळून पांडूला गादीवर बसविले त्याच दिवशी युद्धाची बीजे पेरली गेली. अगदी लहानपणापासूनच धृतराष्ट्राच्या मुलांचे आणि पांडूच्या मुलांचे वैर होते. द्रौपदीचे लग्न होण्याआधीच पांडवाना नाहीतसे करण्याचे प्रयत्न झाले होते." (कर्वे, इरावती : युगान्त, पृ.११५) यावरून द्रोपदीमुळे महाभारत झाले असे म्हणता येत नाही याची ग्वाहीच या उत्तरातून मिळते. द्रौपदी ही खरीखुरी भूमीकन्या असून तिचे पाय भूमीवर, हृदय संसारात, माहेरी, सासरी असे. आजची स्त्री आपल्या कुळाच्या उधारासाठी आपल्या पतीच्या अनेक वाईट गोष्टींकडे दुर्लक्ष करून नि:स्वार्थीपणे आपल्या संसाराचा गाडा हाकताना दिसते. आजच्या समाजात पाहायला मिळतात तशीच नाती महाभारताचाही भाग असलेली दिसतात. कुंती, तिच्या माहेरची माणसे, अर्जुनाची सून उत्तरा, भीष्म, शंतनू, गांधारी, तिचा भाऊ, सख्खे – सावत्र, लहान – मोठे, चुलते – पुतणे, आजोबा – नातू असे गुंतागुंतीचे संबंध असलेली मिथके या पौराणिक कथेत दिसून येतात.

धृतराष्ट्र, पांडू, विदुर तिघेही व्यासांचे पुत्र असून धृतराष्ट्र व पांडूच्या माता या राजकन्या पण आईमुळे सूत ठरलेला विदुर बुद्धिमान असूनही त्याला राज्यपद भोगता आले नाही. वसुदेवाची बहीण कुंती म्हणजे कृष्णाची आत्या होय. कृष्णाचा संबंध हा द्रौपदी स्वयंवरावेळी पांडवांशी येतो. एका पर्वाचा अंत आणि दुसऱ्या पर्वाची सुरुवात म्हणजे कालविभाग असा शब्दनिर्देशित करून इरावती कर्वे यांनी त्याला 'युग'असे म्हटले आहे. एका युगाची रात्र व दुसऱ्या युगाची पहाट असा अर्थ

त्यांनी गृहीत धरला आहे. द्वापारयुगाचा अंत तर कलियुगाची सुरुवात या ग्रंथात पौराणिक मिथक म्हणून मैत्रीचे उदाहरण आलेले दिसते. दुर्योधन आणि कर्ण यांच्या मैत्रीचे एक क्षत्रिय तर एक सूत, त्याचबरोबर कृष्ण—अर्जुन, सुदामा—कृष्ण अशा मैत्रीची उदाहरणे पाहायला मिळतात.

समारोप:-

एकूणच 'युगान्त' या पौराणिक कथेतील मिथकातून आजच्या समाजातील अनेक व्यक्तींचे वर्तन अधोरेखित करता आले आहे. ज्ञान, संस्कार याचे भान जागृत होण्यास अशा मिथक असलेल्या साहित्याचा उपयोग होतो. महाभारतातील पात्रांविषयी आजही जनसामान्यात आदर दिसतो. हेच महाभारत कन्नड साहित्यिक एस. एल. भैरप्पा यांनी 'पर्व' कादंबरीत रेखाटले आहे. सत्यशोधनाच्या दृष्टीने या कादंबरीची निर्मिती त्यांनी केली आहे. एकंदरच 'युगान्त' या कादंबरीत इरावती कर्वे यांनी महाभारतकालीन भीष्म, कुंती, गांधारी, द्रौपदी, कर्ण, कृष्ण या पात्रांच्या संदर्भाने आजच्या मानवी जीवनातील वास्तव सोदाहरण निदर्शनास आणले आहे. या पौराणिक आशयाच्या कादंबऱ्यातील मिथके ही समाजमनाचे दर्शन घडवताना दिसतात. यातून दैवतांबद्दलची श्रद्धा असूनही आजचा समाज आणि समाजातील वास्तवता प्रकर्षाने जाणवते.

निष्कर्ष :-

१. पौराणिक साहित्यातून मिथक ही संकल्पना प्रत्ययाला येते.
२. मिथकांमुळे मराठी साहित्यातील महत्त्वाचे आशय अधोरेखित होण्यास मदत होते.
३. युगान्त या कादंबरीत इरावती कर्वे यांनी योजलेली मिथक संकल्पना आजच्या समाजमनाचे विविध पैलू उलगडणारी आहे याचा प्रत्यय येतो.
४. युगान्त या साहित्यकृतीतील भीष्म, गांधारी, कुंती, कर्ण, द्रौपदी, कृष्ण या मिथकातून आजच्या समाजाचे वास्तव निदर्शनास येते.
५. मिथकांमुळे महाभारतकालीन समाज आणि आजचा समाज यातील साम्य समजण्यास मदत होते.
६. युगान्त या साहित्यकृतीत महाभारतकालीन पात्रांचे नातेसंबंध आणि मानवी रूपाचे वास्तव निदर्शनास येते.

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मराठा इतिहासलेखनातील मिथके आणि वास्तव : विशेष संदर्भ शिवकाळ

चंद्रशेखर काशिनाथ काटे
सहाय्यक प्राध्यापक,
महावीर महाविद्यालय, कोल्हापूर

प्रस्तावना –

इतिहास म्हणजे केवळ भूतकाळातील घटनांची यादी नसून त्या घटनांचे कालसुसंगत, तटस्थ आणि पुराव्याधिष्ठित विश्लेषण होय. भारतीय इतिहासलेखनाच्या परंपरेत, विशेषतः मराठा इतिहासाच्या संदर्भात, अनेकदा भावनिकता, जातीय अस्मिता, राजकीय हेतू आणि लोककथा यांचा प्रभाव दिसून येतो. त्यातूनच इतिहासात मिथके निर्माण होतात. ही मिथके कालांतराने 'इतिहास' म्हणून स्वीकारली जाऊ लागतात, ही बाब गंभीर आहे. सतराव्या शतकात स्वराज्य संस्थापक छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराज (इ.स. १६३०-१६८०) यांनी परकीय शत्रूंना पराभूत करून मराठ्यांचे स्वतंत्र 'मराठा स्वराज्य' स्थापन केले. पेशवेकाळात ज्याचे रुपांतर साम्राज्यात झाले. ब्रिटिशांनी सन १८१८ मध्ये मराठा साम्राज्याचा अंत केला.

मराठयांचा इतिहास हा अनेक पराक्रमांनी, लढायांनी भरलेला आहे, विशेषत: छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराजांचा काळ तर अनेक अभूतपूर्व, साहसी, योजनापूर्ण घटनांनी भरलेला आहे. छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराज हे भारतीय इतिहासातील एक अत्यंत प्रभावी, बहुआयामी आणि प्रेरणादायी व्यक्तिमत्त्व मानले जाते. महाराष्ट्राच्या सामाजिक, राजकीय, आणि सांस्कृतिक जडणघडणीत त्यांचे स्थान अनन्यसाधारण मानले जाते. परंतु, छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराजांच्या व्यक्तिमत्त्वाभोवती इतिहासाइतकेच लोककथा, दंतकथा, मिथके आणि अतिरंजित कथा यांचे वलय असलेले दिसून येते. शिवकाळाविषयी सर्वाधिक मिथके, अतिशयोक्ती आणि अपुरे अथवा एकांगी चित्रण आढळते. काही ठिकाणी शिवाजी महाराजांचे दैवीकरण करण्यात आले, तर काही ठिकाणी त्यांना केवळ लुटारू किंवा प्रांतिक बंडखोर ठरवण्याचा प्रयत्न झालेला दिसतो. या दोन्ही टोकांच्या भूमिका ऐतिहासिक वास्तवाशी सुसंगत नाहीत. या मिथकांमुळे कधी कधी खरा इतिहास झाकोळला जातो. तेव्हा शिवकालीन खरा इतिहास आणि मिथके यातील फरक समजावा आणि मिथकांना खरा इतिहास न मानता प्राथमिक पुराव्यांवर आधारित खरा इतिहास मानवा यासाठी सदरचा शोधनिबंध लिहिला आहे. यामध्ये छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराजांच्या काळातील निवडक मिथके संशोधनासाठी निवडली आहे.

संशोधनाची उद्दिष्टे

1. मराठा इतिहासलेखनातील प्रमुख मिथके ओळखणे.
2. शिवकाळाशी संबंधित लोकप्रिय गैरसमजांचे विश्लेषण करणे.
3. समकालीन साधनांच्या आधारे ऐतिहासिक वास्तव स्पष्ट करणे.
4. भावनिक व वैज्ञानिक इतिहासलेखनातील फरक अधोरेखित करणे.
5. वस्तुनिष्ठ इतिहासलेखनाची आवश्यकता अधोरेखित करणे.

हा शोधनिबंध प्राथमिक आणि दुय्यम ऐतिहासिक साधनांवर आधारित आहे. यात सभासद बखर, शेडगावकर बखर आणि आधुनिक मराठी साहित्याचा आधार घेण्यात आला आहे. यासाठी ऐतिहासिक आणि विश्लेषणात्मक पद्धतीचा वापर करण्यात आला आहे.

इतिहासलेखनातील मिथकांची संकल्पना

मिथक म्हणजे अशी ऐतिहासिक मांडणी जी पुराव्यांपेक्षा श्रद्धा, परंपरा किंवा राजकीय हेतूंवर आधारित असते. मराठा इतिहासलेखनात मिथके खालील कारणांनी निर्माण झाली. मराठा इतिहासलेखनात मिथके निर्माण होण्यामागे बखरकारांची अतिशयोक्ती, भक्तिभाव, वसाहतकालीन पूर्वग्रह आणि आधुनिक काळात इतिहासाचा अयोग्य पद्धतीने होत असलेला राजकीय वापर ही प्रमुख कारणे आहेत.

शिवकालीन काही प्रमुख मिथके आणि त्यांचे ऐतिहासिक वास्तव

१) छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराज हे दैवी अवतार होते?

बखरी व आधुनिक मराठी साहित्यामध्ये छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराजांना भवानी मातेचा अवतार मानले जाते. परमानंदाचे 'शिवभारत' आणि समर्थ रामदास यांच्या कवनात शिवाजी महाराजांना देवाचा अवतार म्हटले आहे. शिवपुत्र छत्रपती संभाजी महाराज यांनी लिहिलेल्या 'बुधभूषण' या ग्रंथात छ. शिवाजी महाराजांना 'विष्णूचा अवतार' म्हटले आहे.[१] सभासद म्हणतो की, "अफजलखान सामान्य नव्हे. केवळ दुर्योधनच जातीने होता...त्यास एकले भीमाने मारिला. त्याच प्रमाणे केले. शिवाजी राजाही भीमच. त्यांनीच अफजल मारिला. हे कृत्य मनुष्याचे नव्हे. अवतारीच होता."[२] तर श्रीमंत भोसले महाराज यांच्या बखरीत शिवाजी महाराजांनी अफजलखानाला मारले हे कृत्य मानवी नसून ते एका शिवाच्या अवतारी पुरुषाचे कार्य आहे असे नमूद केलेले दिसते.[३] आधुनिक काळात मराठी साहित्यात या कल्पनेला स्थान दिलेले दिसते. उदा. काही कांदबरीमधून शिवाजी महाराजांना भवानी मातेचा अवतार म्हटले आहे. 'शिक्का-कट्यार' नावाच्या नाटकात यशवंत टिपणीस यांनी छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराजांना 'भवानी मातेचा अवतार' संबोधले आहे.[४] याचीच पुनरावृत्ती नंतरच्या कालखंडात विविध प्रकारच्या साहित्यातून, भाषणातून आलेली दिसून येते.

महाराजांच्या अवतारी संकल्पनेबद्दल बोलताना कॉ. गोविंद पानसरे म्हणतात की, "शिवाजी माणूस होता. चांगला माणूस होता, थोर माणूस होता. हुशार व दूरदृष्टीचा माणूस होता. नीतिमान आणि व्यवहारी माणूस होता. शूर लढवय्या आणि कुशल संघटक होता. पण देव नव्हता. अवतार नव्हता."[५] तर रियासतकार गो. स. सरदेसाई यांच्यामते, "शिवाजी महाराज हे कुशल, व्यवहारज्ञ आणि परिस्थितीची अचूक जाण असलेले राज्यकर्ते होते."[६] यावरून असे दिसून येते की, शिवाजी महाराजांच्या कार्यास कमी लेखणे हा उद्देश असलेला दिसून येतो. जरी स्वत:च्या पुत्राने आपल्या वडिलांचे वर्णन करताना विष्णूचा अवतार संबोधले असले तरी, छ. शिवाजी महाराज यांचे कार्य अवतारी संकल्पनेमुळे झाकोळले जाते. तसेच ऐतिहासिक दृष्ट्या इतिहास पुरुषांना अवतारी म्हणून संबोधणे वस्तुनिष्ठतेला धरून नाही, म्हणून अशा प्रकारच्या संकल्पनेला वेळीच विरोध केला पाहिजे. प्रबोधनकार ठाकरे यांनीही आपल्या 'दगलबाज शिवाजी' या ग्रंथात शिवाजी महाराजांना चिकटवलेल्या अवतार संकल्पनेस खोडून काढले आहे.[७]

२) **छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराज यांना भवानी माता प्रसन्न झाली?**

मूळ अस्सल बखरीतून आणि तसेच काही ललित कादंबऱ्या, नाटके यातून छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराज यांना भवानी माता प्रसन्न होऊन त्यांना तलवार भेट दिल्याचे रेखाटलेले आहे.[८] त्याचबरोबर पुढे असेही दर्शवितात की, भवानी माता प्रसन्न झाल्याने ते स्वराज्य निर्माण करू शकले, यशस्वी झाले. यामध्ये परमानंद याच्या 'शिवभारत' या काव्यात छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराजांना भवानी माता प्रसन्न झाल्याचे दर्शविले आहे. 'बाबाजीवंशवर्णनम' या ग्रंथात भोसले घराण्याचे कुलदैवत श्री भवानी असल्याचे सांगितले आहे. छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराजांची कुलदेवी तुळजाभवानीवर श्रद्धा होती. म्हणूनच शिवाजी महाराजांनी प्रतापगडावर श्री भवानीची स्थापना केली. बखरीतून अफजलखान स्वराज्यावर चालून आला तेव्हा शिवाजी महाराजांनी भवानीदेवीस प्रार्थना केली असता देवीने महाराजांना दृष्टांत देऊन अभयदान दिले. असे वर्णन आलेले दिसते.[९] घटना घडून गेल्यानंतर साधारण पन्नास पेक्षा अधिक वर्षानंतर लिहिलेल्या बखरीतून अशा प्रकारची मिथके आलेली दिसतात. परंतु, खरा इतिहास वेगळा असलेला दिसतो. छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराजांनी आपल्या पेक्षा अनुभवाने आणि शरीराने मोठा असलेल्या अफजलखानाचा वध केला. हि गोष्ट साधी नाही. यासाठी त्यांच्या अंगी असलेला मुत्सद्दीपणा, सहनशीलता, कठीण प्रसंग हाताळण्याची चतुरता आदी विविध गोष्टीमुळे त्यांना हे सहज शक्य झाले. महाराजांचे यश हे त्यांच्या गुप्तहेर खात्याचे अचूक नियोजन आणि 'गनिमी काव्याचा' केलेला योग्य वापराचे परिणाम होते.

'भवानी तलवारी'संबंधी जर विचार करावयाचा झाला तर, सन १६५९ मध्ये बांदा बंदरात (महाराष्ट्र-गोवा सीमेवर) एक पोर्तुगीज जहाज रुतून बसले. महाराजांचे सरदार अंबाजी सावंत यांनी ते लुटले. त्या लुटीत त्यांना एक हिरे-माणक्यांनी मढवलेली तलवार मिळाली. त्याच सुमारास छत्रपती कोकणच्या दौऱ्यावर होते. ७ मार्च १६५९ ला ते सप्तकोटेश्वराचे दर्शन घेण्यास गेलेले असताना अंबाजीचा मुलगा कृष्णाजी सावंत याने ती तलवार महाराजांना भेट दिली. परंतु प्रजेकडून फुकट भेट

घेणे महाराजांच्या तत्वात बसेना. म्हणून मग त्यांनी कृष्णाजीला त्या तलवारीची किंमत म्हणून ३०० होन दिले. आणि तिला "भवानी तलवार" असे नाव दिले.[१०] १८७५ मध्ये प्रिन्स ऑफ वेल्स भारतदौर्यावर असतांना कोल्हापूरच्या राजाने ही तलवार प्रिन्सना भेट दिली. ती सध्या लंडनच्या "इंडियन म्युझिअम" मध्ये आहे. मध्यंतरी जेव्हा बॅरिस्टर अंतुले हे महाराष्ट्राचे मुख्यमंत्री होते (१९८०-८२) तेव्हा त्यांनी भवानी तलवारीचा ताबा मिळविण्यासाठी प्रयत्न केले होते. पण त्यात ते यशस्वी झाले नाहीत.

३) तानाजीने घोरपडीचा उपयोग करून कोंडाणा गड चढला होता?

छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराजांचे सरदार तानाजी मालुसरे यांनी सन १६७० साली कोंढाणा किल्ला सर केला. या वेळी तानाजीने मुघल सरदार उदयभान यास मारून हा किल्ला स्वराज्यात आणला. मात्र हा लढाईत स्वत: तानाजी मालुसरे हे धारातीर्थी पडले, म्हणून किल्ल्याचे नाव बदलून 'सिंहगड' असे ठेवले. एका मिथकानुसार 'यशवंती' नावाच्या घोरपडीला दोर लावून तानाजी कोंडाणा किल्ल्याचा द्रोणागिरी कडा चढला. हा उल्लेख शाहीर तुलसीदास याने आपल्या पोवाड्यात केला आहे.[११] सभासद बखरीत मात्र वेगळा उल्लेख सापडतो. सभासद म्हणतो की, "जैसा वानर चालून जातात त्याप्रमाणे मावळे कड्यावर चालून गेले आणि कडा चढून गडावर गेले."[१२] घोरपडीच्या सहाय्याने किल्ला चढला ही घटना आजही अनेक इतिहास ग्रंथामधून, साहित्यातून, अभ्यासक्रमातून खरी असल्याप्रमाणे मांडली जाते. वास्तविक प्राणिशास्त्रानुसार घोरपड मानवी वजन पेलू शकत नाही. घोरपड ही हलका दोरखंड कड्यावर नेऊ शकते आणि नंतर तो दोरखंड कोणीतरी कुठेतरी बांधून किंवा हातात धरून खालील सैन्याला कड्यावर घेतले जाऊ शकते. सभासदानेच यावर आपले वेगळे मत प्रकट केलेले दिसते. त्याच्यामते, तानाजी मालुसरे यांनी आपल्या चपळ व बहादूर मावळ्यांच्या मदतीने कोंडाणा किल्ला जिंकला आणि आपणास हेच खरे मानावे लागते.

मात्र असे असले तरी यापूर्वी घोरपडीच्या सहाय्याने गड जिंकण्याचा यशस्वी प्रयत्न इ.स. १४७० मध्ये झालेला दिसतो. तसे त्याचे पुरावे देखील सापडतात. महमदशाह बहामनी याच्या कालखंडात खेळणा (विशालगड) हा किल्ला कर्णसिंह आणि भीमसिंह या पिता-पुत्राने घोरपडीच्या सहाय्याने सर केला होता.[१३] पुढे मिळालेल्या सनदामध्ये त्यांचे आडनाव 'घोरपडे' झाल्याचे दिसते. मध्ययुगीन महाराष्ट्रात घोरपडे घराण्याच्या विविध शाखा असल्याचे पहावयास मिळते.

ऐतिहासिक संदर्भ: मावळे हे 'सह्याद्रीचे पुत्र' होते, कडे चढण्यात ते स्वतः निष्णात होते. दोरखंड फेकण्यात आणि कड्यांचा वापर करण्यात त्यांचे कौशल्य वाखाणण्याजोगे होते.

४) कल्याणच्या सुभेदाराच्या सुनेचे प्रकरण –

छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराजांच्या स्त्री-दाक्षिण्य बद्दल बोलताना सन १६५७ मध्ये कल्याणच्या स्वारीत आबाजी सोनदेव यांनी कल्याणच्या सुभेदार मुल्ला अहमद आणि त्याचा मुल्ला याहीया यांना हरवून मारले. या स्वारीत कल्याणच्या सुभेदाराची सून आणि अमूल्य खजिना आबाजी यांनी पकडला. ती स्त्री अत्यंत सुंदर असल्याने तिला महाराजांसाठी 'नजराणा' म्हणून सादर केले गेले. त्यावेळेस शिवाजी महाराजांनी त्या स्त्रीला आदराने 'माता' असे संबोधून म्हटले की, "आमची आई जिजाबाई इतकीच सुंदर असती, तर आम्हीही सुंदर असतो." महाराजांनी तिला वस्त्रालंकार देऊन, कडक संरक्षणात सन्मानाने परत पाठविले. अशी माहिती चिटणीस बखरीतून आलेली आहे.[१४]मात्र शेडगावकर बखरीत यात सातारा-वाई येथील गोळेवाडी येथील गोळे घराण्यातील बंडखोर यास स्वत: शिवाजी महाराजांनी तेथे जाऊन शासन केले. (शके १५७५, इ.स. १६५३-५४)या गोळे सरदाराची स्त्री पळून प्रतापगडाच्या पायथ्याशी आली असता गडावरील ब्राम्हण सुभेदार याने तिला कैद केले व सातारा मुक्कामी महाराजांकडे एक जिन्नस म्हणून स्तुति करत सादर केली. त्यावेळी महाराज म्हणाले की. "ही बाई फार चांगली व स्वरूपही चांगले आहे हे मजला पुर्वीच जर करिता समजले असते तरी मी ईच्या पोटी जन्म घेतला असता परंतु मी प्रारब्धाचा हीन म्हणोन जिजाऊ आई साहेब यांचे पोटी जन्म घेतला..."[१५] महाराजांनी नंतर त्या ब्राम्हण सुभेदारास दोन हजार मोहरा देऊन राज्य हद्दपार केले.

या कथेसंदर्भात चिटणीस बखर आणि शेडगावकर बखर या दोन्ही बखरीमधील फरक दिसून येतो. पहिलं, दोन्ही बखरीत घटनेचा कालखंड वेगवेगळा दिला आहे. दुसरं, दोन्ही बखरीत महाराजांना ती स्त्री पेश करणारा व्यक्ति निराळा आहे. तिसरं, त्या स्त्रीला आदराने सन्मानित केल्यानंतर महाराजांनी त्या ब्राम्हण सुभेदारास राज्य हद्दपार केले, पण आबाजी सोनदेव

यांना कसलीच शिक्षा केली नाही. चौथे, शिवाजी महाराजांनी त्या स्त्री बद्दल जे बोलले ते दोन्ही बखरीत वेगवेगळे आले आहे. येथे सुंदर स्त्रीच्या पोटी आपला जन्म झाला नाही म्हणून शिवाजी महाराज स्वत:च्या नशिबास दोष देताना दिसतात असे बखरकारांनी चित्र रंगवलेले दिसते. परंतु जिजाऊ आईसाहेब या किती सुंदर होत्या याची शिवभारतात अध्याय २ व ३ मध्ये आलेली आहेत. पाचवे, दोन्ही बखरीत आलेल्या स्त्रीचा धर्म वेगवेगळा दिसून येतो. सदर दोन्ही बखरी वेगवेगळ्या ठिकाणाबद्दल, व्यक्तींबद्दल तसेच परस्परविरोधी नोंदी करताना दिसतात.

या घटना ज्या बखरीत आलेल्या दिसतात, त्या बखरी शिवाजी महाराजांच्या निधनानंतर बऱ्याच वर्षांनी लिहिलेल्या आहेत. चिटणीस बखरीची रचना सन १८१० साली म्हणजे महाराजांच्या निधनानंतर १३० वर्षांनी केलेली आहे. तर शेडगावकर बखर ही सन १८५४ मध्ये लिहिली असून महाराजांच्या निधनानंतर १७४ वर्षांनी लिहिली आहे.

सदर घटनेत सत्याचा अंश दिसून येत नाही कारण याला कोणताही ऐतिहासिक पुरावा उपलब्ध नाही. मात्र ही घटना विविध ग्रंथामधून, भाषणातून खरी असल्याची सांगितली जाते. छ. शिवाजी महाराज हे स्त्रियांचा आदर करत. युद्धावेळी स्त्री आणि बालके यांना अपाय होऊ नये म्हणून काळजी घेतली जायची. त्यामुळे नंतरच्या काळात महाराजांना अधिक योग्य दाखविण्यासाठी अशा प्रकारची मिथके बखरीमधून आलेली दिसतात.

५. निष्कर्ष

छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराज यांनी अत्यंत परिश्रमातून स्वराज्याची स्थापना केली. महाराज फक्त स्वराज्य स्थापन करून थांबले नाहीत, त्यांनी स्वराज्याचा विस्तार करताना विविध शत्रूंशी झुंज दिली. विविध कठीण प्रसंगातून स्वराज्याला सावरले. यासाठी त्यांना दिलदार आणि प्रामाणिक मानसं मिळाली. त्यांनी प्रसंगी स्वराज्यासाठी आपले बलिदान दिले. सन १६७४ मध्ये महाराजांनी स्वत:ला छत्रपती म्हणवून घेत राज्याभिषेक केला. छ. शिवाजी महाराज यांनी कोणत्याही चमत्कारांशिवाय स्वकर्तृत्वाने, पराक्रमाने मोठे झालेले रयतेचे राजे होते. त्यामुळे नंतरच्या कालखंडात त्यांच्याबद्दलची तयार झालेली मिथके त्यांच्या व्यक्तिमत्वाला रंजक बनवतात, परंतु त्या पाठीमागील वास्तव हे अधिक प्रेरणादायी आणि मार्गदर्शक असल्याचे दिसते. चांगली मिथके केव्हा तयार होतात, जेव्हा ती मिथके तयार होण्यासाठी त्या स्तरावरचा व्यक्ति समोर असतो, त्याचे कर्तृत्व अजोड असते. शिवाजी महाराजांना दैवी अवतार संबोधनं, श्री भवानी देवी प्रसन्न झाली असे दाखवणे, तीने महाराजांना प्रसिद्ध अशी 'भवानी तलवार' देणे आणि शिवाजी महाराजांचे स्त्री-दाक्षिण्य दाखविण्यासाठी अशी मिथके तयार केलेली दिसतात. तीच गोष्ट घोरपडीच्या कथेची. नंतरच्या काळात घोरपडीची कथा लोकसाहित्याचा भाग बनली.

येथे एक गोष्ट लक्षात घेण्यासारखी आहे ती म्हणजे लोकसाहित्यमधून केले गेलेले इतिहास विषयक लिखाण सत्य मानण्याकडे अधिक कल दिसून येतो. यामुळे सत्य इतिहास झाकोळला जातो. पुढच्या पिढीस खरा इतिहास सांगायचा असेल तर अशा मिथकांना वेळीच उत्तर दिले पाहिजे. त्यासाठी वस्तुनिष्ठ इतिहासलेखन करणे गरजेचे आहे. इतिहास संशोधकाने कोणत्याही स्वार्थी गोष्टी टाळून सत्य आणि वस्तुनिष्ठ इतिहास लेखन केले पाहिजे.

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भारतीय साहित्य आणि संस्कृतीतील स्त्रियांसंबंधी मिथक आणि वास्तव

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सारांश

सदर संशोधनप्रबंधात भारतीय साहित्य आणि संस्कृतीतील स्त्रियांसंबंधी प्रचलित मिथक (गैरसमज, आदर्शीकृत प्रतिमा) आणि वास्तव यांचा अभ्यास करण्यात आला आहे. भारतीय सांस्कृतिक परंपरेत स्त्रीला देवी, त्यागमूर्ती, पतिव्रता किंवा अबला अशा विविध प्रतिमांमध्ये मांडले गेले आहे. या प्रतिमा एका बाजूला स्त्रीचे गौरवगान करतात, तर दुसऱ्या बाजूला तिच्यावर विशिष्ट नैतिक, सामाजिक आणि सांस्कृतिक अपेक्षांचे ओझे लादतात. प्रस्तुत अभ्यासात पौराणिक महाकाव्ये, भक्ती साहित्य, औपनिवेशिक काळातील सुधारक लेखन, तसेच आधुनिक आणि स्त्रीवादी साहित्याचा तुलनात्मक विचार करण्यात आला आहे.

पौराणिक साहित्यातील स्त्रीप्रतिमा आदर्शवादी असून त्यामध्ये त्याग, शील आणि कर्तव्यपालन यांना विशेष महत्त्व दिले गेले आहे. भक्ती काळात स्त्रीला आध्यात्मिक अभिव्यक्तीचे स्वातंत्र्य मिळाले असले तरी सामाजिक बंधने कायम राहिली. औपनिवेशिक काळात सामाजिक सुधारणा चळवळींमुळे स्त्रीशिक्षण, विधवा पुनर्विवाह आणि स्त्रीहक्क यांसंबंधी जागृती झाली. विसाव्या शतकानंतर स्त्रीवादी साहित्याने पारंपरिक मिथकांना आव्हान देत स्त्रीच्या स्वतंत्र ओळखीचा, तिच्या भावविश्वाचा आणि सामाजिक संघर्षांचा अभ्यास मांडला.

या संशोधनाचा निष्कर्ष असा आहे की भारतीय साहित्य हे स्त्रीविषयक मिथकांचे केवळ प्रतिबिंब नसून त्यांचे पुनर्मूल्यांकन करणारे आणि परिवर्तन घडवणारे प्रभावी माध्यम आहे. स्त्रीला केवळ पूजनीय किंवा दुर्बल प्रतिमांमध्ये मर्यादित न ठेवता तिला स्वतंत्र, सक्षम आणि समान अधिकार असलेली व्यक्ती म्हणून स्वीकारणे ही सामाजिक प्रगतीसाठी अत्यावश्यक बाब आहे. त्यामुळे स्त्रीविषयक मिथकांचे चिकित्सक विश्लेषण आणि वास्तवाधिष्ठित दृष्टिकोन स्वीकारणे हे समताधिष्ठित समाजरचनेच्या दिशेने महत्त्वाचे पाऊल ठरते.

प्रस्तावना

भारतीय संस्कृती ही बहुविध परंपरा, धर्म, भाषा आणि सामाजिक रचनांनी समृद्ध आहे. या संस्कृतीत स्त्रीचे स्थान एकाच वेळी पूजनीय आणि दुय्यम असे दोन्ही स्वरूपात दिसते. एका बाजूला "यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते" अशी वंदना केली जाते, तर दुसऱ्या बाजूला स्त्रीवर अन्याय, भेदभाव आणि नियंत्रणाची परंपरा आढळते. भारतीय साहित्य—पौराणिक, मध्ययुगीन, आधुनिक आणि समकालीन—हे या विरोधाभासांचे प्रतिबिंब आहे.

स्त्रीविषयक मिथक म्हणजे समाजाने रूढ केलेल्या अशा कल्पना ज्या वास्तवाशी पूर्णतः जुळत नाहीत, परंतु सांस्कृतिक आणि धार्मिक परंपरांमुळे त्या सत्य मानल्या जातात. प्रस्तुत लेखात भारतीय साहित्य आणि संस्कृतीतील स्त्रीविषयक प्रमुख मिथकांचे विश्लेषण करून त्यांच्या मागील सामाजिक वास्तवाचा अभ्यास करण्यात येईल.

१. पौराणिक साहित्यातील स्त्रीप्रतिमा: आदर्श की बंधन?

रामायण आणि महाभारत या महाकाव्यांमध्ये स्त्रियांची भूमिका महत्त्वपूर्ण असली तरी त्यांचे चित्रण विशिष्ट आदर्श चौकटीत केले गेले आहे. सीता ही पतिव्रता, त्याग आणि सहनशीलतेचे प्रतीक मानली जाते. द्रौपदी ही स्वाभिमानी आणि प्रश्न विचारणारी स्त्री असली तरी तिच्या आयुष्यावर पुरुषसत्ताक निर्णयांचा प्रभाव दिसतो.

या कथांमधून निर्माण झालेले मिथक असे की स्त्रीने संकटातही मौन आणि सहनशीलता राखावी. परंतु वास्तवात द्रौपदीने सभेत प्रश्न विचारले, अन्यायाला आव्हान दिले. म्हणजेच पौराणिक साहित्यातही स्त्रीची केवळ एकांगी प्रतिमा नाही, तर तिच्यात प्रतिकारशक्तीही आहे.

२. देवीस्वरूप स्त्री: सन्मान की दडपण?

भारतीय संस्कृतीत स्त्रीला देवीचे स्थान दिले गेले आहे. दुर्गा, लक्ष्मी आणि सरस्वती या देवतांद्वारे स्त्रीशक्तीचे गौरवगान केले जाते.

मिथक असे की स्त्रीला देवी मानले म्हणजे तिला उच्च स्थान मिळाले. परंतु देवी ही अलौकिक, सर्वगुणसंपन्न आणि त्रुटीरहित असते. सामान्य स्त्रीकडूनही तशीच अपेक्षा ठेवली जाते—ती संयमी, सुंदर, कर्तव्यदक्ष आणि त्यागी असावी. या अवास्तव अपेक्षा स्त्रीवर मानसिक दडपण निर्माण करतात.

३. मध्ययुगीन काळातील स्त्री: भक्ती आणि मर्यादा

मध्ययुगीन भक्ती साहित्यात स्त्रीला भक्त, संत आणि कवयित्री म्हणून स्थान मिळाले. मीराबाई आणि जनाबाई यांनी समाजातील बंधनांना छेद देत आपली आध्यात्मिक ओळख निर्माण केली. त्यांनी देवभक्तीद्वारे आत्मस्वातंत्र्य व्यक्त केले.
तथापि, सामाजिक पातळीवर स्त्रियांना शिक्षण, संपत्ती आणि स्वनिर्णयाचे अधिकार मर्यादित होते. सतीप्रथा, बालविवाह, पडदा पद्धती यांसारख्या प्रथा स्त्रीच्या स्वातंत्र्यावर बंधने आणणाऱ्या होत्या. त्यामुळे भक्ती साहित्यातील स्त्रीचे स्वातंत्र्य हे आध्यात्मिक पातळीवर अधिक दिसते, सामाजिक पातळीवर नव्हे.

४. स्त्री म्हणजे अबला — ऐतिहासिक गैरसमज

दीर्घकाळ स्त्रीला शारीरिक व मानसिकदृष्ट्या दुर्बल समजले गेले. परंतु इतिहासात अनेक पराक्रमी स्त्रियांची उदाहरणे आढळतात. राणी लक्ष्मीबाई यांनी स्वातंत्र्ययुद्धात शौर्य दाखवले. सावित्रीबाई फुले यांनी स्त्रीशिक्षणासाठी लढा दिला.
या उदाहरणांमुळे "अबला" ही संकल्पना केवळ सामाजिक रूढी आहे, हे स्पष्ट होते. वास्तवात स्त्रीने संधी मिळाल्यास ती सर्व क्षेत्रांत प्रावीण्य मिळवू शकते.

५. औपनिवेशिक काळ आणि सामाजिक सुधारणा

ब्रिटिश काळात सामाजिक सुधारणांची चळवळ सुरू झाली. विधवा पुनर्विवाह, स्त्रीशिक्षण, बालविवाहविरोधी कायदे यांमुळे स्त्रियांच्या स्थितीत बदल घडू लागला. मराठी साहित्यातील सुधारकांनी स्त्रीशिक्षण आणि समानतेचा पुरस्कार केला.
या काळात साहित्य हे केवळ मनोरंजनाचे साधन न राहता सामाजिक परिवर्तनाचे माध्यम बनले. स्त्रीविषयक प्रश्नांवर लेख, कादंबऱ्या आणि नाटकांच्या माध्यमातून चर्चा होऊ लागली.

६. आधुनिक आणि समकालीन साहित्य

विसाव्या शतकात स्त्रीवादी विचारसरणीचा प्रभाव साहित्यावर पडला. स्त्रीच्या अंतर्मनाचा, लैंगिकतेचा, स्वातंत्र्याचा आणि ओळखीचा शोध घेणारे साहित्य निर्माण झाले. शांता शेळके आणि गौरी देशपांडे यांसारख्या लेखिकांनी स्त्रीच्या भावविश्वाला आवाज दिला.
समकालीन साहित्यामध्ये कामकाजी स्त्री, एकल माता, घटस्फोटित स्त्री, ग्रामीण स्त्री, दलित स्त्री अशा विविध स्तरांवरील स्त्रियांचे वास्तववादी चित्रण दिसते. यामुळे स्त्रीचे व्यक्तिमत्त्व बहुआयामी स्वरूपात समोर येते.

७. लोकप्रिय संस्कृती आणि माध्यमे

चित्रपट, मालिका आणि जाहिराती यांमध्ये स्त्रीची प्रतिमा समाजावर प्रभाव टाकते. अनेकदा ती केवळ सौंदर्याचे प्रतीक किंवा घरगुती भूमिकेत दाखवली जाते. तथापि, अलीकडील काळात स्त्रीकेंद्रित कथानकांना महत्त्व प्राप्त होत आहे. महिला पोलीस अधिकारी, वैज्ञानिक, क्रीडापटू अशा सक्षम भूमिका लोकप्रिय माध्यमांत दिसू लागल्या आहेत.
हे बदल समाजातील स्त्रीच्या वाढत्या सहभागाचे आणि जागरूकतेचे प्रतीक आहेत.
भारतीय साहित्य आणि संस्कृतीतील स्त्रीविषयक मिथक व वास्तव या विषयावर आधारित काही महत्त्वाच्या पुस्तकांचा खाली उल्लेख केला आहे. ज्यामधून स्त्रियांची भूमिका समजून घेण्यास मदत होईल.

१. The Second Sex — सिमोन द बोव्हुआर

हे पुस्तक जागतिक स्त्रीवादी चळवळीचा पाया मानले जाते. "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" हा प्रसिद्ध विचार याच पुस्तकातून आला. या ग्रंथात स्त्रीची सामाजिक निर्मिती कशी होते, तिच्यावर लादलेले मिथक कसे

तयार होतात आणि पुरुषप्रधान समाजरचना कशी कार्य करते, याचे सखोल विश्लेषण केले आहे. जरी हे पुस्तक पाश्चात्त्य संदर्भातील असले तरी भारतीय स्त्रीच्या स्थितीचे विश्लेषण करताना ते अत्यंत उपयुक्त ठरते.

२. स्त्री पुरुष तुलना — ताराबाई शिंदे

मराठीतील हे एक क्रांतिकारी पुस्तक मानले जाते. ताराबाई शिंदे यांनी स्त्री पुरुषांमधील सामाजिक दुजाभावावर कठोर टीका केली आहे. त्यांनी धार्मिक आणि सामाजिक मिथकांना प्रश्न विचारत स्त्रीवरील अन्यायाचे तर्कशुद्ध विश्लेषण केले. भारतीय स्त्रीवादी लेखनाचा हा आरंभबिंदू मानला जातो.

३. We Also Made History — उर्मिला पवार व मीना मून

या पुस्तकात दलित स्त्रियांच्या सहभागाचे आणि त्यांच्या संघर्षांचे इतिहासलेखन केले आहे. मुख्य प्रवाहातील स्त्रीवादात दलित स्त्रियांचा आवाज दुर्लक्षित राहिला होता; या ग्रंथाने तो पुढे आणला. स्त्रीविषयक वास्तव समजून घेण्यासाठी जात, वर्ग आणि लिंग या तिन्ही घटकांचा विचार करणे आवश्यक आहे, हे या पुस्तकातून स्पष्ट होते.

४. The God of Small Things — अरुंधती रॉय

ही कादंबरी केवळ कौटुंबिक कथा नसून समाजातील लिंगभेद, जातीय बंधने आणि लैंगिक नैतिकतेवरील दुटप्पीपणाचे चित्रण करते. स्त्रीच्या इच्छांना आणि स्वातंत्र्याला समाज कसा नियंत्रित करतो, याचे वास्तववादी दर्शन यात घडते. पारंपरिक मिथकांना आव्हान देणारे हे साहित्य आहे.

५. Agnisakshi — ललितांबिका अंतरजनम

ही कादंबरी केरळमधील नाम्बूदरी समाजातील स्त्रियांच्या जीवनावर आधारित आहे. धार्मिक आणि सांस्कृतिक रूढींमुळे स्त्रियांवर लादलेली बंधने आणि त्यांच्या अंतर्मनातील संघर्ष यांचे हृदयस्पर्शी चित्रण यात आहे. परंपरेच्या नावाखाली स्त्रीवर होणाऱ्या अन्यायाचे वास्तव या कादंबरीतून उलगडते.

६. The Palace of Illusions — चित्रा बॅनर्जी दिवाकरुनी

महाभारतातील द्रौपदीच्या दृष्टिकोनातून लिहिलेली ही कादंबरी आहे. पौराणिक कथांमधील स्त्रीच्या भूमिकेचे पुनर्मूल्यांकन या ग्रंथातून केले गेले आहे. द्रौपदीला केवळ पीडित न दाखवता तिच्या भावविश्वाला, तिच्या निर्णयांना आणि तिच्या स्वप्नांना महत्त्व दिले आहे. मिथक आणि वास्तव यांचा संगम या पुस्तकात दिसतो.

७. स्त्री: एक बहुरूपी — विद्या बाळ

या पुस्तकात स्त्रीच्या विविध सामाजिक भूमिकांचा आणि तिच्या अनुभवांचा अभ्यास आहे. शिक्षण, नोकरी, कुटुंब, राजकारण या सर्व क्षेत्रांतील स्त्रीची बहुआयामी ओळख उलगडण्यात आली आहे. मिथकांपासून मुक्त होऊन स्त्रीचे स्वतंत्र अस्तित्व अधोरेखित करणारे हे लेखन आहे.

निष्कर्ष:

वरील विचारातून स्पष्ट होते की भारतीय साहित्यामध्ये स्त्रीचे चित्रण एकसंध किंवा एकांगी नाही. काही ग्रंथांनी पारंपरिक मिथकांना बळ दिले, तर अनेकांनी त्या मिथकांना आव्हान देत वास्तववादी दृष्टिकोन मांडला.

स्त्रीविषयक साहित्य केवळ भावनिक मांडणी नसून ते सामाजिक इतिहास, सांस्कृतिक रचना आणि सत्तासंबंध यांचे विश्लेषण आहे. त्यामुळे या पुस्तकांचा अभ्यास केल्यास भारतीय संस्कृतीतील स्त्रीविषयक मिथक आणि वास्तव यांतील तफावत अधिक स्पष्टपणे समजते. भारतीय साहित्य आणि संस्कृतीत स्त्रीविषयक मिथक आणि वास्तव यांच्यातील ताण स्पष्टपणे जाणवतो. स्त्रीला देवी, त्यागमूर्ती किंवा अबला म्हणून पाहण्याची परंपरा तिच्या संपूर्ण व्यक्तिमत्त्वाला मर्यादित करते. वास्तवात स्त्री ही विचारशील, स्वाभिमानी, सर्जनशील आणि सक्षम व्यक्ती आहे.

साहित्य हे समाजाचे प्रतिबिंब आणि परिवर्तनाचे साधन आहे. म्हणूनच स्त्रीविषयक मिथकांचे पुनर्मूल्यांकन करून वास्तववादी आणि समताधिष्ठित दृष्टिकोन स्वीकारणे आवश्यक आहे. स्त्रीला पूजनीय प्रतिमेत न अडकवता तिला समान हक्क, संधी आणि आदर देणे हेच खऱ्या अर्थाने प्रगत भारतीय संस्कृतीचे लक्षण ठरेल.

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भारतीय ज्ञानपरंपरेतील पंचतंत्र कथांचे ऐतिहासिक व नीतिशास्त्रीय विश्लेषण: एक अभ्यास

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प्रस्तावना

सर्वसाधारण समजूत अशी आहे, की पंचतंत्र हे मुलांसाठी लिहिलेलं एक बाळबोध गोष्टींचं पुस्तक आहे; पण हा एक मोठा गैरसमज आहे. पंचतंत्र हे मुळात वास्तव जीवनात उपयोगी पडणारा व योग्य वाट दाखवणारा ग्रंथ आहे.खरे तर पंचतंत्र हे यश कसे मिळवायचे, हे सांगणारा जगातील आद्य ग्रंथ आहे. पंचतंत्रातील गोष्टींवर दैनंदिन जीवनाची जबरदस्त पण वास्तववादी पकड आहे. या पुस्तकाने संपूर्ण विश्वात स्वतःची अशी एक अत्युच्च उंची गाठली आहे. पंचतंत्र कथा चांगले जीवनासाठी मार्गदर्शन करतात, ज्यांच्या जीवनात संभ्रम आहे त्यांना कठीण प्रसंगी उपयोगी पडते.

जीवन जगणं ही एक कला असून आयुष्यात योग्य दृष्टिकोनाचं महत्त्व काय, हे पंचतंत्र दाखवून देते. पंचतंत्रातलं तत्त्वज्ञान साधं सोपं आहे, जीवनाशी सुसंगत आहे व कायमच नीतिमत्तेच्या मार्गाने जाऊन जीवनातील समस्या सोडवणारे आहे.पंचतंत्रात बोलता येणाऱ्या वन्यप्राण्यांच्या गोष्टींद्वारे लहान-थोरांसाठी ज्ञानाचा एक उपयुक्त खजिनाच निर्माण करून ठेवलेला आहे. भारतीय ज्ञान परंपरेत 'पंचतंत्र' हा विलक्षण मौल्यवान ठेवा आहे .

विष्णुशर्मा रचित या पंचतंत्राचा मूळ प्रभाव जागतिक होता. पहिल्या-दुसऱ्या शतकात लिहिल्या गेलेल्या मूळ संस्कृत पुस्तकाचे अनेक परकीय व भारतीय भाषांत थोडाफार बदल होऊन भाषांतरे होत राहिली. पंचतंत्र निरनिराळ्या पन्नास भाषांत भाषांतरित झाले असून बदल होत आले आहेत. या गोष्टींची सुमारे दोनशे रूपांतरे झालेली आहेत. अनेक जागतिक प्राणिकथांचा मूळ जनक विष्णुशर्मा हाच आहे, असे म्हटले जाते.

पंचतंत्र कथालेखनाची प्रेरणा

विष्णु शर्माने या कथा कशा लिहिल्या, यामागची कथाही मोठी रोचक आहे. पंचतंत्र पुस्तकाच्या प्रस्तावनेतच पुढील कथा आढळते.

अमरशक्ती नावाचा एक राजा होता. त्याला तीन पुत्र होते. त्यांची नावे बहुशक्ती, उग्रशक्ती व अनंतशक्ती अशी होती. तिघेही अत्यंत निर्बुद्ध होते. त्यामुळेच अमरशक्ती खूप उदास असे. एकदा अमरशक्ती आपल्या दरबाऱ्यांना म्हणाला, ह्या मुलांना शिकवण्याचा मार्ग सांगा.तेव्हा सुमती नावाचा एक विद्वान उत्तरला, ह्या मुलांना धार्मिक कथा न सांगता शहाणपणाच्या व चातुर्याच्या गोष्टी सांगा. हे काम विष्णुशर्मा नावाचा एक विद्वान आहे तो करू शकेल.तेव्हा तात्काळ विष्णुशर्माला बोलावण्यात आलं. विष्णुशर्मान तिन्ही मुलांना शहाणं करण्यासाठी तीन महिन्यांची मुदत मागून घेतली.

राजा अमरशक्ती हा चमत्कार कसा काय घडतो, हे लक्षपूर्वक पाहत होता. आपली कल्पनाशक्ती उंचावत विष्णुशर्माने दंतकथांना वास्तव व्यवहारी रूप दिलं. एका गोष्टीतून दुसरी गोष्ट विणत जे शिकवायचं होतं ते खूप विस्ताराने शिकवले. प्रत्येक कथेचं तात्पर्य काढत काढत राजपुत्रांना प्रत्यक्ष जीवन शिक्षणाचे धडे शिकवले.

पंचतंत्र कथामधील पाच भाग

मुळात पंचतंत्र या शब्दाचा अर्थ पाच क्लृप्त्या. पंच म्हणजे पाच व तंत्र म्हणजे क्लृप्त्या. या सर्व गोष्टी पाच शीर्षकांखाली विभागल्या आहेत व या पाचही भागांत व्यवस्थापन, वैयक्तिक जीवन व जगण्यासाठी लागणारा धूर्तपणा शिकवलेला आहे.

1. पंचतंत्राच्या पहिल्या मित्रभेद नावाच्या भागात अत्यंत धूर्तपणे दोन मित्रांच्यात भांडणलावून त्यांना अलग करणाऱ्या तिसऱ्या माणसाच्या कथा आहेत.

2. दुसरा भाग मैत्रीचं महत्त्व सांगतो. या भागात मैत्रीचं महत्त्व, एकत्रितरित्या काम केल्याचेफायदे, बुद्धीच्या वेगवेगळ्या कक्षा असणारे भिन्न; पण समविचारी लोक एकत्र आले तर कसा फायदाहोतो, ते रंजक कथांद्वारे सांगितले आहे.
3. तिसरा काकोलुकियम्हा भाग सांगतो, की पूर्वीच्या शत्रूशी मैत्री कधीच हितकारी होत नाही. जो पूर्वी शत्रू असून आता मैत्रीचा हात पुढे करतो त्याच्यापासून सावध राहा.
4. लब्धप्रणशा नामक चौथ्या भागात आपत्काली योग्य तो विचार सुचून बुद्धिचातुर्याने व प्रसंगावधानाने साकारलेल्या कार्यसिद्धीबद्दलच्या गोष्टी आहेत.
5. पाचव्या म्हणजेच अपरिक्षितकारक या भागात पूर्वी कधीही एखाद्या समस्येला सामोरा गेलो नसता असा प्रसंग आलाच तर अशा वेळी सारासार विचार करून योग्य निर्णय घेण्याची क्षमता अंगी कशी बाणवायची या संदर्भातल्या गोष्टी आहेत.

पंचतंत्र कथांचे पहलवीमध्ये पहिले भाषांतर

पंचतंत्र हे मूळ पुस्तक संस्कृत भाषेतील; परंतु दुर्दैवाने त्याची मूळ प्रत मिळत नाही. त्याचे पहिले भाषांतर पेहलवीमध्ये झाले. सहाव्या शतकात इराणच्या नौशीवीन राजाच्या कारकिर्दीत डॉ. बर्ज़ोई हिंदुस्थानात आला आणि इ.स. ५५०च्या सुमारास पंचतंत्राचे पेहलवीमध्ये भाषांतर करून त्याने इराणमध्ये नेले. मूळच्या पंचतंत्रातील एखाद दुसरी गोष्ट त्याने गाळली. एखाद दुसरी नवीन घातली व एक-दोन गोष्टी निराळ्या स्वरूपात लिहिल्या. त्याला त्याने करटक आणि दमनक असे नाव दिले. हे पेहलवी भाषांतरही आज मिळत नाही. पण या भाषांतरावरून केलेले सिरिॲक भाषेतील भाषांतर आज उपलब्ध झाले आहे. आजपर्यंत ते दोन वेळा जर्मन पंडितांनी जर्मन भाषांतरासह संपादित केले आहे.

पंचतंत्र कथांचे अरबी भाषेत भाषांतर

पेहलवीवरून झालेले दुसरे भाषांतर अरबी भाषेत अबदल्ला इब्न अल् मोकाफा याने केले. त्याला त्याने कालिल्लाह व दिमनाह असे नाव दिले. ते फारच लोकप्रिय झाले. याची सारीच हस्तलिखिते उपलब्ध आहेत व ते बरेच वेळा मुद्रितही झाले आहे. या अरबी भाषांतराच्या मार्गानेच पंचतंत्र जगभर पसरले.

जगभरात अनेक भाषात पंचतंत्र कथांचे भाषांतर

या अरबी भाषांतरावरून अकराव्या शतकात सिमिअन सेठने याचे ग्रीक भाषेत भाषांतर केले. ग्रीकमधून ते इतर स्लाव्हनिक भाषांत गेले. सोळाव्या शतकापासून या ग्रीक पंचतंत्राची लॅटिन, इटालियन व जर्मन भाषांतरे झाली. तेराव्या शतकात अरबी भाषांतरावरून जुन्या स्पॅनिश भाषेत पंचतंत्र गेले. हिब्रू भाषेतही त्याचे एक भाषांतर झाले. हिब्रूवरून लॅटिनमध्ये कलिल्लाह आणि दिमनाहचे पुस्तकया नावाने त्याचे भाषांतर जॉन ऑफ कापुआ याने केले. या लॅटिनवरून पुढे युरोपमधील दहा भाषांत त्याची भाषांतरे झाली. जॉन ऑफ कापुआच्या लॅटिन भाषांतरावरून स्पॅनिश, झेक व इटालियन भाषांतही त्याची भाषांतरे झाली. इटालियनवरून त्याचे इंग्लिश भाषेत भाषांतर झाले.

इंग्लिश भाषेत त्याच्या बऱ्याच आवृत्त्या निघाल्या. अरबी भाषेतून नासरल्लाने त्याचे पर्शियनमध्ये भाषांतर केले.

पर्शियनवरून त्याचे फ्रेंच भाषांतर झाले. त्याला बिडपाईच्या कथाअसे नाव मिळाले. बिडपाई म्हणजे संस्कृत विद्यापति. अर्थात् संस्कृतमध्ये दिलेला पंचतंत्राचा कर्ता जो विष्णुकर्मा तोच हा विद्यापति.

फ्रेंचवरून पुढे इंग्लिश, जर्मन, स्वीडिश, डच, पोलिश, हंगेरिअन व ग्रीक या भाषांत भाषांतरे झाली. अशा प्रकारे जगातील निरनिराळ्या साठ भाषांत त्याच्या बऱ्याच आवृत्त्या निघाल्या आणि जावा-सुमात्रापासून आइसलँडपर्यंत सर्व ठिकाणी ते पसरले. इतकी अपूर्व लोकप्रियता लाभणे हेच पंचतंत्रकर्त्याच्या बुद्धीचे व कौशल्याचे गमक आहे. थिओडर बेनफे या जर्मन पंडिताने इ.स. १८५९ मध्ये मूळ संस्कृतमधून त्याचे भाषांतर जर्मन भाषेत केले.

पंचतंत्राच्या जगभर प्रवासाची हकीकत इतक्या विस्ताराने देण्याचे कारण एवढेच की, जगातील सर्व लोकांना या ग्रंथाने केवढी मोहिनी घातली हे वाचकांच्या लक्षात यावे.

भारतातील विविध भाषेत पंचतंत्र कथांचा प्रसार

भारतात इ.स. ११९९ मध्ये पूर्णभद्रसुरि नावाच्या जैन विद्वानाने एका काश्मिरी मंत्र्याच्या सांगण्यावरून पंचतंत्राची एक संस्कृत प्रत तयार केली. सध्या भारतात प्रचलित असलेल्या पंचतंत्राच्या सर्व आवृत्त्यांवर याचा बराच परिणाम झालेला आहे. डॉ. हंटेल या जर्मनी पंडिताने १९२४ साली पाच निरनिराळी हस्तलिखिते ताडून, त्यांची बारीक छाननी करून संस्कृतमध्ये पूर्णभद्रसूरीची एक अधिकृत प्रत छापली. ही हारवर्ड ओरिएंटल सिरीजमध्ये तीन भागांत विस्तृत टिपा, पाठभेद विवेचनासह छापली आहे.

भारतातील सर्व भाषात भाषांतरे

भारतातील सर्व भाषांत कमी-अधिक प्रमाणात पंचतंत्राचे भाषांतर झाले आहे. लोकांच्या तोंडीही या गोष्टी आज हजारो वर्षे आहेत. मराठीत जुन्यात जुने भाषांतर महानुभावी पंथाच्या लोकांनी केले आहे. वि. ल. भावे यांनी महाराष्ट्र कवी मासिकात ते १९०७ साली प्रसिद्ध केले.

पंचतंत्रमधील नीतीविषयक मार्गदर्शन

जागतिक वाङ्मयात पंचतंत्राचे स्थान अद्वितीय आहे. सुसंस्कृत मानवी समाजात मनुष्य आत्मनिरीक्षण करू लागला तेव्हा त्याला स्वतःच्या सुखाकरिता आणि समाधानाकरिता मित्रांच्या सहकार्याची आणि साहाय्याची जरुरी वाटू लागली आणि परस्परांच्या सुखासमाधानासाठी काय करावे याबाबतीत पंचतंत्रासारख्या नीतीच्या गोष्टींनी त्याला स्फूर्ती दिली. भारतीय समाजात कमीत कमी पाच हजार वर्षे तरी या गोष्टी प्रचलित आहेत. पंचतंत्र भारतात तयार झाले असले तरी त्याची व्याप्ती भारतापुरतीच संकुचित न राहता जगातील सर्व देशांत व समाजांत थोड्याफार संक्षेपाने ते रूढ आहे. या ना त्या रूपाने ते अखिल मानवजातीस मार्गदर्शक होत आहे.

पंचतंत्र कथांचा मुळ हेतू नीतीशिक्षण

पंचतंत्राचा हेतू नीतिशिक्षण देणे आहे. नीती म्हणजे व्यवहारनीती! साध्या गोष्टींच्या रूपाने सारे शहाणपण यात भरलेले आहे. यातील गोष्टी लहान मुलांचे मनोरंजन करणाऱ्या काऊचिऊच्या गोष्टी नाहीत, तर सर्वसामान्य माणसास रोजच्या व्यवहारांत कसे वागावे हे शिकविणाऱ्या आहेत. आणि विशेष म्हणजे त्यात सम्यक नीती सांगितली आहे. आत्यंतिक नीती यात नाही. प्रत्यक्ष रोजच्या आचरणात आणता येतील अशीच नीतितत्त्वे यात आहेत. सामाजिक जीवनावर धनाची पडलेली दाट छायाही पंचतंत्र मान्य करते. धनाच्या महत्त्वाविषयी यात पुष्कळच सांगितले आहे. जगात सुख आणि समाधान मिळविण्याकरिता धनोत्पादन जरूर केले पाहिजे, असे पंचतंत्र मान्य करते. धनाच्या महत्त्वाविषयी यात पुष्कळच सांगितले आहे. जगात सुख आणि समाधान मिळविण्याकरिता धनोत्पादन जरूर केले पाहिजे असे पंचतंत्र अट्टहासाने सांगते. तरीसुद्धा धन हेच सर्वस्व नाही हेही पंचतंत्रच सांगते.

हीच यातील सम्यक नीती. अतिलोभो न कर्तव्यो लोभं नैव परित्यजेत् I याचा अर्थ अतिलोभ करू नये, पण त्याचा अर्थ लोभ सोडून द्या असे मात्र नाही. असेच श्लोक पंचतंत्रात जेथे तेथे आहेत. केवळ पुस्तकी पांडित्याचा उपहास करणारीही गोष्ट यात आली आहे. थोडक्यात सांगावयाचे म्हणजे पंचतंत्र ही सामान्य मानवाची व्यवहारगीताच आहे.

पंचतंत्राची एकंदर पाच तंत्रे आहेत. त्यांपैकी प्रत्येक तंत्रात एक मुख्य गोष्ट. नंतर गोष्टीत गोष्ट, गोष्टीत गोष्ट सांगितली आहे. त्यांची गुंफण इतकी सुंदर केली आहे की, कमळाच्या पाकळ्यांप्रमाणे गोष्टीतून गोष्ट अगदी सहज निघाल्यासारखी वाटते; आणि पुन्हा या गोष्टीतून गोष्ट सांगताना मूळ मुद्दा कधीच बाजूला जात नाही. गोष्ट संपली की मूळ मुद्दा पुन्हा तयारच ! त्या मुद्द्यावर पुन्हा पाच-दहा श्लोकांत चर्चा की लगेच पुन्हा दुसरी गोष्ट. दोन गोष्टींमध्ये असलेल्या श्लोकांतच पंचतंत्राचे सारे वैशिष्ट्य आहे.

पंचतंत्रातील गोष्टी नव्याने बनविलेल्या नाहीत. त्या इतर वाक्यातही आढळतात. लोकांच्या तोंडी असलेल्या व इतरजुन्या ग्रंथांतील गोष्टीच पंचतंत्रकर्त्याने घेतल्या आहेत. पण त्या हाताळण्याची त्याची हातोटी विलक्षण आहे. याचा लेखक खराच कलावंत होता. ज्या पद्धतीने या गोष्टी सांगितल्या आहेत. त्यावरून त्याच्या प्रतिभेची चमक कळते.

समारोप

अशा प्रकारे आधुनिक जगात चांगल्या नीतीमुल्यांची, गुणांची व व्यवस्थापनाशी सांगड घालूननेतृत्वगुण कौशल्याने वापरून यशस्वी कसं व्हावं, हे तंत्र पंचतंत्रात शिकविले आहे. व्यवस्थापन काय किंवा दैनंदिन जीवन काय नेतृत्व दोन्ही ठिकाणी अत्यंत आवश्यक असतं. पंचतंत्र व्यवस्थापन आणि दैनंदिन जीवनातील समस्या यांना तोंड द्यायला अत्यंत उपयुक्त ठरते.

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Myth of Achilles and Patroclus

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Abstract

Greek mythology is composed of stories about the gods, heroes, giants and rituals of the ancient Greeks and classical antiquity. Homer's epics, Iliad and Odyssey are the sources of the Greek myths. Achilles is a central figure in Homer's Iliad. Patroclus is the closest and trusted friend of Achilles. They exhibit an extremely powerful and emotional relationship. Achilles, the son of the sea nymph, Thetis and King Peleus, is famous for his strength, bravery and courage. He is the greatest warrior of the Greek army in the Trojan war. Patroclus is also brave. He is kind and loyal. And he plays a crucial role by motivating Achilles during the Trojan war. Achilles and Patroclus are in a very close emotional relationship that exhibit love, loyalty, friendship, grief and honour. Their relationship is still the matter of debate in art as well as academia. The present paper is a humble attempt to discuss the nature of relationship of Achilles and Patroclus with reference to Madeline Miller's popular novel, 'The Song of Achilles' (2011).

Keywords: *Achilles, Patroclus, myth, relationship*

Human universe is full of myths which are the stories based on traditions. The word, 'Myth' is derived from the Greek word *mythos* or *muthos* which literally means 'utterance' or 'something one says'. This means, originally myth was oral. Hence, myth is the word about a traditional story set in the remote past describing actions of divine beings and human heroes involved in situations that relate to planetary origins and the relationship of mans and divine. Some myths have real origins, while others are imaginary. However, myths are more than just stories. They are holy tales explaining the world and human experiences. Subsequently, myths are relevant each human era as they answer timeless questions and serve as compass to each generation. They are about birth, death, the life after death, the origin of man and the world, good and evil and the nature of human being in general. Myths are found in every human culture. They form a universal cultural narrative. They exhibit the collective wisdom of human beings. The myth of Achilles is one of the most favourable myths across the world even today. And Madeline Miller's 'The Song of Achilles' presents Achilles from the point of Achilles' close companion, Patroclus.

Achilles is one of the most popular characters in Greek mythology. He is the son of Peleus, a Greek king of Phthia and Thetis, a sea nymph or goddess. This makes Achilles a demi-god. In fact, there are two myths behind the marriage of Peleus and Thetis. In one myth, both Zeus, the king of the gods and Poseidon, god of the sea, had fallen in love with Thetis and wished to marry her. But there was a prophecy that Thetis would have a son who would become greater than his father. Subsequently, Zeus arranges for Thetis's marriage with a mortal man, so that his power should remain unchallengeable. As per another version of the myth, Thetis rejects Zeus's proposal which makes Zeus furious and he curses that Thetis would never marry a god. Zeus arranges that Thetis marries Peleus, his grandson. Actually, Thetis is raped and forced into marriage with Peleus. Thetis is caught by Peleus who at the instructions of Centaur Chiron in Sepia. Thetis, a goddess is reluctant to succumb to Peleus, a mortal king. She changes into different forms, but Peleus, the grandson of Zeus, with the support of gods wins her and marries her. They have seven children. Thetis kills her first six children, but she adores her seventh son, Achilles. In order to make Achilles invulnerable, she dips him in the River, Styx, as there is a prophecy that Achilles has to choose between two fates - a short life with glory and eternal fame and a long, passive and forgotten life. Achilles chooses the first fate and remains the unforgotten hero of the Trojan War.

Patroclus, on the other hand, born in Opus, is the son of the Argonaut Menoetius, a king and the son of kings and Philomela. Menoetius marries Philomela when she is fourteen as the priest tells that she would be fruitful to her husband. She is an only child and her father's wealth would go to her husband. But she is not

wise. She is simple, even quite stupid. Philomela loves the ocean and music. She has brought a lyre as a part of her dowry, which Menoitius later sends to Phthia along with Patroclus, and which later belongs to Achilles. When Patroclus is born, Menoetius prises newly born Patroclus from Philomela's arms and gives the responsibility to a nurse. Though Patroclus is born a prince, he is not athletic and is shy, awkward, and small for his age. He is not strong and cannot sing. That is why his father, king Menoetius always rebukes him. When Patroclus is five years old, Menoetius hosts games. And here Patroclus sees Achilles for the first time. He is impressed by the looks of Achilles who wins the games.

When Patroclus becomes nine years old, his father takes him to King Tyndareus as a suitor to Tyndareus' and Queen Leda's daughter, Helen. But Tyndareus rejects Patroclus as he is too young to be a man. And Helen chooses Menelaus. All this shows that Patroclus is not adored by his father. Later on, when Patroclus is ten years old, he shoves Clysonymus, the son of a nobleman, as Clysonymus wishes to take the pairs of dice from Patroclus's hands. Accidently, Clysonymus dies. As per the demand of Clysonymus's parents' demand Patroclus is immediately exiled. He is sent to Peleus, the King of Phthia and the father of Achilles. And thus begins the mythical relationship of Achilles and Patroclus.

The two millennia story of Achilles and Patroclus is so fascinating that it is always the matter common discussions, academic debates and literature. Their relationship is discussed from two dimensions. Some consider that they are close friends and others consider that they are lovers. Let us begin with 'The Iliad' by Homer. Here Achilles and Patroclus are presented as fiercely bonded mates with a deep emotional attachment. No doubt, this attachment is romantic, but Homer does not clearly mention that there is any sexual factor in it. Here Achilles always calls Patroclus his 'dear companion. They are found alone in Achilles's tent. Homer shows that their relationship is emotional. During the Trojan War only Patroclus can rouse Achilles into action. When Achilles denies fighting, Patroclus wears Achilles's armour and fights on the battlefield. When Patroclus is killed by Hector in the battlefield, Achilles screams terribly and falls to the ground in grief. He fights fiercely and avenges the death of Patroclus by killing Hector. It is also shown that Achilles sees the ghost of Patroclus requesting him to bury their bones together in the same grave. All this shows that their relationship is not platonic.

Furthermore, even the ancient Greeks themselves could not agree about the true nature of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus. In the ancient Greece, the sexual relationships between men were an important part of society. The men in such relationships were called the *erastes* and the *eromenos*. The *erastes* was an adult male lover mostly in his 20's. He played the active role. While the *eromenos* was a young male, mostly a teen, who played the passive role. Besides satisfying physical desires, the *erastes* used to teach the *eromenos* the principles of citizenship. This means that during the ancient Greek time the gay relationships were supposed to be culturally noble. For instance, Aeschyluls in his play, 'Myrmidons' presents a strong sexual relationship of Achilles and Patroclus. Here, Achilles while standing by the corpse of Patroclus laments, "And I honoured the intimacy of your thighs by bewailing you." Plato in his 'The Symposium' clearly refers to Achilles and Patroclus as lovers and to him Achilles was the passive *eromenos* and not the active *erastes*. This shows that the practice of pederasty was common in the ancient Athens and Aeschylus and Plato presented the relationship of Achilles and Patroclus according to then Athenian culture.

However, during the Middle Ages this mythical relationship of Achilles and Patroclus loses the element of romance. They were presented not as the heroes of the Trojan war but the villains. Once again in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the myth of Achilles and Patroclus goes closer to that of Athenian conception of love. The painters like Gavin Hamilton and Nilolai Ge present the grieving love of Achilles for dead Patroclus.

Presently, Achilles and Patroclus myth is being presented according to the new culture that supposes sexuality as a critical part of a person's identity. Today Achilles and Patroclus are presented either as platonic friends or gay lovers. For instance, in the film, Troy (2004), Achilles and Patroclus are presented as cousins and not as gay lovers. On the other hand, Madeline Miller's novel, 'The Song of Achilles' (2011) is a plain and simple love story. It presents the romantic and sexual relationship between Achilles and Patroclus.

'The Song of Achilles' is narrated from the perspective of Patroclus. In the beginning of the novel, as a young boy, he is exiled to Phthia where he comes in close contact with Achilles. The novel consists of thirty-three chapters covering Achilles' and Patroclus' childhood, their training under Chiron and their heroics in Trojan War and their death in the war. It shows the development of their romantic relationship. For instance, the following excerpt from the chapter Seven of the novel vividly portrays their romantic love while they are being trained under Chiron:

It is summer, one of the first fine days. We are on the beach after lunch, our backs to a sloping piece of driftwood. The sun is high, and the air warm around us. Beside me, Achilles shifts, and his foot falls open against mine. It is cool, and chafed pink from the sand, soft from a winter indoors. He hums something, a piece of a song he had played earlier.

I turn to look at him. His face is smooth, without the blotches and spots that have begun to afflict the other boys. His features are drawn with a firm hand; nothing awry, or sloppy, nothing too large all precise, cut with the sharpest of knives. And yet the effect itself is not sharp.

He turns, and finds me looking at him. 'What?' he says.

'Nothing."

I can smell him. The oils that he uses on his feet, pomegranate and sandalwood, the salt of clean sweat, the hyacinths we had walked through, their scent crushed against our ankles. Beneath it all is his own smell, the one I go to sleep with, the one I wake up to. I cannot describe it. It is sweet, but not just. It is strong but not too strong. Something like almond, but that still is not right. Sometimes, after we have wrestled, my own skin smells like it.

He puts a hand down, to lean against. The muscles in his arms curve softly, appearing and disappearing as he moves. His

My pulse jumps, for no reason I can name. He has looked me a thousand times, but there is something different in this gaze, an intensity I do not know. My mouth is dry and can hear the sound of my throat as I swallow.

He watches me. It seems that he is waiting.

I shift, an infinitesimal movement, towards him. It is like the leap from a waterfall. I do not know, until then, what I am going to do. I lean forward and our lips land clumsily on each other They are like the fat bodies of bees, soft and round and giddy with pollen. I can taste his mouth- hot and sweet with honey from dessert. My stomach trembles, and a warm drop of plea sure spreads beneath my skin. *More*.

The strength of my desire, the speed with which it flowers, shocks me; I flinch and startle back from him. I have a moment, only a moment, to see his face framed in the afternoon light, his lips slightly parted, still half-forming a kiss. His eyes are wide with surprise.

I am horrified. What have I done? But I do not have time to apologize. He stands and steps backwards. His face has closed over, impenetrable and distant, freezing the explanations in my mouth. He turns and races, the fastest boy in the world, up the beach and away.

My side is cold with his absence. My skin feels tight, and my face, I know, is red and raw as a burn. (pp. 59-60)

Similarly, in Chapter Fifteen, when Odysseus comes to persuade Achilles to be the part the Greek army, he understands the love between Achilles and Patroclus. The following extract presents unambiguous views of Odysseus about the culture of the days:

Odysseus smiled in return, teeth white against his dark beard. Excellent. One tent's enough, I hope? I've heard that you prefer to share. Rooms and bedrolls both, they say.'

Heat and shock rushed through my face. Beside me, I heard Achilles' breath stop.

"Come now, there's no need for shame it's a common enough thing among boys.' He scratched his jaw, contemplated. Though you're not really boys any longer. How old are you?'

'It's not true,' I said. The blood in my face fired my voice. It rang loudly down the beach.

Odysseus raised an eyebrow. 'True is what men believe, and they believe this of you. But perhaps they are mistaken. If the rumour concerns you, then leave it behind when you sail to war.'

Achilles' voice was tight, and angry. 'It is no business of yours, Prince of Ithaca.'

Odysseus held up his hands. 'My apologies if I have offended. I merely came to wish you both goodnight, and assure that all was satisfactory. Prince Achilles. Patroclus.' He inclined his head and turned back to his own tent.

Inside the tent there was quietness between us. I had wondered when this would come. As Odysseus said, many boys took each other for lovers. But such things were given up as they grew older, unless it was with slaves or hired boys. (pp. 165-166)

In the same chapter, the following dialogue exhibits the romantic bond:

Achilles was looking at me. 'Your hair never quite lies flat, bert. He touched my head, just behind my ear. 'I don't think I've ever told you how I like it.'

I said. My scalp prickled where his fingers had been. 'You haven't,'

1 should have. His hand drifted down to the vee at the base of my throat, drew softly across the pulse. 'What about this? Have I told you what I think of this, just here?'

No, I said.

"This surely, then.' His hand moved across the muscles of my chest; my skin warmed beneath it, 'Have I told you of this?"

'That you have told me.' My breath caught a little as I spoke

'And what of this?" His hand lingered over my hips, drew down the line of my thigh. 'Have I spoken of it?"

You have.'

'And this? Surely, I would not have forgotten this. His cat's smile. "Tell me I did not.'

'You did not.'

"There is this, too. His hand was ceaseless now. 'I know I have told you of this.'

I closed my eyes. "Tell me again,' I said.

Later, Achilles sleeps next to me. Odysseus' storm has come, and the coarse fabric of the tent wall trembles with its force. I hear the stinging slap, over and over, of waves reproaching the shore. He stirs and the air stirs with him, bearing the musk-sweet smell of his body. I think: this is what I will miss. I think: I will kill myself rather than miss it. I think: how long do we have? (pp . 171-172)

And their bond lasts up to the end of their lives. Achilles quarrels with Agamemnon over Briseis, a Trojan slave girl and he refuses to fight in the war. This brings heavy losses upon the Greek army. Patroclus puts on Achilles' armour and fight to save the Greek army. He is killed by Hector. Achilles, then in the fits of anger and vengeance kills Hector. But finally as per the prophecy, Achilles is killed by Paris. They are buried together. It is showed that their love lasts even after their death.

To conclude, the myth of Achilles and Patroclus is conceived as per the cultural currents across the ages. Madeline Miller's novel, 'The Song of Achilles' interprets the myth in a purely romantic perception. Achilles and Patroclus are presented as lovers and the vividly celebrates their gay relationship.

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Role of Women in The *Mahabharata* : A Critical Study

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Abstract

The Ramayana, attributed to the sage Valmiki, is one of the foundational epics of Indian mythology and has played a vital role in shaping Indian moral, social, and cultural values. While the epic primarily narrates the life and ideals of Lord Rama, it also presents a wide range of female characters whose roles are central to the development of the narrative. This research paper examines the role of women in the Ramayana with special reference to characters such as Sita, Kaikeyi, Sumitra, Mandodari, Shabari, and Urmila. The study explores how these women embody virtues such as devotion, sacrifice, wisdom, moral courage, and spiritual strength, while also revealing the patriarchal limitations imposed upon them. Through close textual analysis, the paper argues that women in the Ramayana act as moral centers and emotional anchors of the epic. At the same time, their experiences expose gender-based inequalities present in ancient society. The paper concludes that the Ramayana offers a complex and layered portrayal of women, combining traditional ideals of femininity with subtle critiques of social injustice, making the epic relevant to contemporary discussions on gender and ethics.

Keywords : *Ramayana, Women, Indian Mythology, Sita, Dharma, Patriarchy, Feminine Ethics*

Introduction

The *Ramayana* is one of the greatest epics of Indian literature and occupies a central position in the cultural and moral imagination of India. Traditionally attributed to the sage Valmiki, the epic narrates the life of Lord Rama, the prince of Ayodhya, whose life is guided by the principles of Dharma, duty, sacrifice, and righteousness. Beyond its religious significance, the *Ramayana* serves as a socio-cultural text that reflects the norms, values, and hierarchies of ancient Indian society.

Although the epic is largely centered on male heroism and royal duty, women play a crucial role in shaping the narrative and its ethical framework. Female characters in the Ramayana are not merely secondary figures; rather, they influence major decisions, embody moral ideals, and reveal the emotional consequences of social expectations. This research paper aims to examine the role of women in the *Ramayana* by analyzing major female characters and highlighting how their experiences reflect both empowerment and oppression within a patriarchal social order.

The *Ramayana*, attributed to the sage Valmiki, is one of the foundational epics of Indian mythology and has played a vital role in shaping Indian moral, social, and cultural values. While the epic primarily narrates the life and ideals of Lord Rama, it also presents a wide range of female characters whose roles are central to the development of the narrative. This research paper examines the role of women in the *Ramayana* with special reference to characters such as Sita, Kaikeyi, Sumitra, Mandodari, Shabari, and Urmila. The study explores how these women embody virtues such as devotion, sacrifice, wisdom, moral courage, and spiritual strength, while also revealing the patriarchal limitations imposed upon them. Through close textual analysis, the paper argues that women in the *Ramayana* act as moral centers and emotional anchors of the epic. At the same time, their experiences expose gender-based inequalities present in ancient society. The paper concludes that the Ramayana offers a complex and layered portrayal of women, combining traditional ideals of femininity with subtle critiques of social injustice, making the epic relevant to contemporary discussions on gender and ethics.

Sita is the most significant female character in the *Ramayana* and is traditionally regarded as the embodiment of ideal womanhood. As the wife of Lord Rama, she symbolizes devotion, purity, patience, and moral integrity. Her voluntary decision to accompany Rama into exile demonstrates her courage and commitment to marital duty. Sita's willingness to endure hardship reflects the ideal of *pativrata dharma,* which emphasizes loyalty and sacrifice.

Despite her outward obedience, Sita is not portrayed as weak or submissive. During her captivity in Lanka, she firmly resists Ravana's temptations and threats. Her moral strength and self-respect remain unshaken even in isolation and suffering. Sita's refusal to compromise her dignity highlights her inner resilience and ethical firmness.

The episode of *Agni Pariksha* exposes the gender bias prevalent in ancient society. Despite being a victim of abduction, Sita is required to prove her purity to society. This incident has been interpreted by scholars as a critique of patriarchal morality, where women are subjected to stricter standards than men. Sita's final decision to return to Mother Earth can be read as an act of silent resistance against social injustice and continuous humiliation. Thus, Sita emerges as both a symbol of ideal femininity and a figure of quiet protest.

Kaikeyi is one of the most complex and controversial female characters in the *Ramayana*. She is often remembered as the cause of Rama's exile, yet her character reveals multiple dimensions of power, emotion, and vulnerability. Initially, Kaikeyi is portrayed as a brave and loving queen who enjoys King Dasharatha's affection. She once saved the king's life in battle, for which she was granted two boons.

Kaikeyi's demand for the fulfillment of these boons—Rama's exile and Bharata's coronation—demonstrates her political agency and assertiveness. Influenced by her maid Manthara, Kaikeyi allows maternal ambition to overshadow moral judgment. Her actions highlight how women, when exercising power in patriarchal systems, are often portrayed negatively.

However, Kaikeyi's later remorse and emotional suffering reveal her humanity. She realizes the consequences of her decisions and experiences deep guilt. Through Kaikeyi, the *Ramayana* presents a morally ambiguous woman whose actions are shaped by manipulation, ambition, and emotional conflict rather than inherent evil. Her motherly love for Bharata over power so much that she forgets that she is unjust to Ram due her action she is ever hated by Bharata

Sumitra, the mother of Lakshmana and Shatrughna, represents emotional balance, wisdom, and selfless devotion. Unlike Kaikeyi, she does not seek power or recognition. When Lakshmana chooses to accompany Rama into exile, Sumitra encourages him instead of expressing sorrow or resistance.

Her statement that Rama is Lakshmana's true father and Sita his true mother reflects her profound understanding of Dharma. Sumitra's role, though limited in the narrative, is crucial in shaping Lakshmana's character and reinforcing values of loyalty and service. She represents women whose strength lies in wisdom and emotional maturity rather than authority.

Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, is portrayed as a wise, virtuous, and morally conscious woman. Despite being the queen of Lanka, she consistently advises Ravana to return Sita and avoid destruction. Mandodari's counsel reflects ethical clarity and political foresight.

Her inability to influence Ravana's decisions highlights the limitations placed on women's voices in patriarchal societies. Mandodari's grief after Ravana's death underscores the tragedy of ignored wisdom. She represents women who possess moral insight but lack institutional power to effect change.

Shabari, an ascetic woman of humble origin, represents spiritual devotion that transcends social hierarchies. Her unwavering faith in Rama and her patient wait for his arrival exemplify pure *bhakti*. Rama's acceptance of her offerings signifies spiritual equality and challenges caste and gender discrimination.

Shabari's role emphasizes that moral and spiritual greatness is not limited to royal women. Her character broadens the scope of female representation in the *Ramayana* by including marginalized voices. Shabari represents '*Karuna Rasa'*

Urmila, the wife of Lakshmana, is often overlooked in the epic. While Lakshmana serves Rama during exile, Urmila remains in Ayodhya, enduring loneliness and separation. Her sacrifice is silent yet profound, representing emotional resilience and unrecognized suffering.

Urmila's character highlights the invisible labor of women who uphold *Dharma* from the margins. Her endurance adds depth to the epic's portrayal of sacrifice.

Despite presenting strong female characters, the *Ramayana* reflects patriarchal norms where women face stricter moral expectations and limited autonomy. Sita's trials, Mandodari's ignored advice, and Urmila's silence reveal systemic inequality. However, the epic also critiques these norms by emphasizing women's suffering and moral superiority.

Conclusion :

The *Ramayana* presents women as central moral agents whose roles are essential to the epic's ethical vision. Through characters such as Sita, Kaikeyi, Sumitra, Mandodari, Shabari, and Urmila, the epic explores devotion, power, sacrifice, wisdom, and resilience. While rooted in patriarchal traditions, the Ramayana acknowledges women's emotional depth and moral authority. The portrayal of women thus remains relevant for understanding gender roles, ethics, and social justice in both ancient and modern contexts.

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The Architecture of Belief: Vedic Ontologies and Urban Realities in the Mythography of Devdutt Pattanaik

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Abstract

This research paper examines the intersection of Vedic philosophy and contemporary urban reality through the extensive work of Indian mythologist Devdutt Pattanaik. Central to the investigation is Pattanaik's "Business Sutra" framework, which posits those subjective beliefs (myth) drive behavior and organizational outcomes. It analyses his reinterpretations of ancient concepts such as the cyclical nature of time (Kala), the transactional ethics of ritual (Yagna), and the archetypal leadership of the Hindu Trinity (Indra, Vishnu, Shiva) the study explores how these Vedic ontologies provide a psychological technology for modern urban life. Furthermore, the report delves into his urban planning metaphors, specifically the tension between the "organic" growth of the Indian bazaar and the "inorganic" planning of Western-inspired cities. Finally, the research critically evaluates the academic and traditionalist responses to Pattanaik's postmodern methodology, addressing concerns over narrative simplification and scriptural accuracy.

Keywords: Mythology, Vedic Philosophy, Urban Reality, Management, Leadership, Dharma, Yagna, Urban Planning.

Introduction

Devdutt Pattanaik's work is predicated on the distinction between myth (subjective truth) and math (objective truth). While modern management science relies heavily on the latter quantifiable metrics and KPIs. Devdutt Pattanaik argues that human enterprises are fundamentally driven by the former. He suggests that no society can exist without myth, as it creates the notions of right and wrong, rights and duties, and the very structure of reality within which individuals operate. In his view, belief is the seed from which sprouts every human enterprise, and since belief is inherently irrational, it remains within the realm of myth (Jayant 45).

This ontological shift requires a transition from the Western focus on goal (objective achievement) to the Indic focus on gaze (*darshan*), where value is derived from how one sees and is seen by others (Jayant 45). This 3B framework "As is belief, so is behavior, so is business" underscores the crucial role of values in shaping corporate strategies. The difference between Western and Indic paradigms is profound: Western mythology often perceives time as linear and truth as objective, which manifests in management as a singular concentration on success and completion. In contrast, the Indic paradigm values cyclical time and subjective truth, emphasising wisdom, evolution, and relationship-driven growth.

Temporal Paradigms: The Line, the Wheel, and the Spiral

A fundamental issue in Devdutt Pattanaik's study is the contradiction between the Western understanding of time as a linear development and the Indic view of time as a cyclical or spiral process. Western discourse sees a journey from chaos to order, or from enslavement to liberty, which serves as the foundation for modern capitalism and Peter Drucker's Management by Objectives (MBO) philosophy. However, Devdutt Pattanaik contends that modern professionals are frequently schizophrenic, torn between this linear duty and a culturally ingrained cyclical perspective.

Devdutt Pattanaik uses three symbols of the deity Vishnu to represent organisational maturity: the tilak (line), chakra (wheel), and shankha (spiral). The vertical line in the tilak represents clear direction and focused emphasis on operational efficiency. When this line continues into a chakra, it symbolises the recognition of cycles where solutions lead to new challenges, necessitating strategic thinking. The spiral represents the ultimate level of maturity, focusing on the human mind and whether recurring cycles make leaders into wiser individuals rather than being static in a changing environment.

The Socio-Economic Ritual: Redefining Yagna as Reciprocity

Devdutt Pattanaik challenges the reduction of wealth (Artha) to extraction by reclaiming the Vedic rite of Yagna as an exchange described by the phrase 'dehi me dadami te' (give me as I give you). This new definition transfers the emphasis from sacrifice to reciprocity, implying that the foundation of any sustainable civilisation is feeding the hunger of others. He criticises modern business schools for replacing the word "hunger" with "ambition," which he sees as a cunning substitute for greed that puts shareholders ahead of the community.

Vedic economics considers inputs as 'bhog' (investments in relationships) and results as 'prasad' (reciprocal favour or grace). Debt, or rinn, serves as the 'glue' that connects society through mutual obligation, rather than just a liability.Devdutt Pattanaik believes that the Japanese notion of Ikigai, which emphasises individual purpose, misses the important aspect of reciprocity and class consciousness. The authentic yajaman (leader as householder) controls finite resources against infinite desires, ensuring the market is an ecosystem of reciprocal sustenance rather than extraction.

Leadership Archetypes: Navigating Insecurity and Detachment

Devdutt Pattanaik's mapping of Vedic deities to corporate leadership styles provides a psychological taxonomy for organizational life through three archetypes: Indra, Shiva, and Vishnu. Indra represents the insecure ruler of *Swarga* (paradise), driven by a hunger for abundance and a fear of rivals. In the corporate Shark Tank, such leaders view employees as mere resources or switches in a circuit board, leading to cultures characterized by pretension and performance-based insecurity.

In contrast, Shiva represents the detached hermit of *Kailasa*, a leader who has outgrown desire but offers a sterile environment indifferent to prosperity or growth. While his followers feel safe, there is no pasture for organizational development. Vishnu serves as the ideal intermediary, the dependable householder of *Vaikuntha* who integrates empathy with progress. Vishnu expands his gaze (*darshan*) to accommodate the ambitions and fears of others, ensuring that success is an attraction rather than a chase. It's making the organization dependable, the Vishnu-like leader ensures wealth (*Lakshmi*) flows voluntarily.

Urban Reality: Aranya vs. Grama and the Evolution of the City

Devdutt Pattanaik uses the distinction between Aranya (forest) and Grama (settlement/village) as a metaphor for urban administration. Aranya is nature's default condition, ruled by matsya nyaya (the law of the fishes) that favours the strong over the weak. In contrast, Grama represents human attempt to create order through laws and rituals. Modern Indian cities are frequently schizophrenic mixtures of these stages, with inorganic planned sections colliding with organic settlements such as slums.

Western urban planning is monotheistic and expects uniform submission to central authority, whereas Indian cities are polytheistic and diverse. The bazaar's perceived disorder is actually a form of vitality, or a microcosmic order within macrocosmic turmoil. As populations migrate, they bring localised deities to the city, resulting in an evolution in which iconography adapts to the urban gaze; for example, the Mahalakshmi Temple in Mumbai features a lion, which is traditionally a Durga symbol, but is patronised by merchants who see the goddess as a vegetarian bringer of wealth.

Epics as Management Frameworks: Ramayana vs. Mahabharata

The two major Indian epics serve as prototypes for organisational ethics. In the Ramayana, Rama represents the dependable rule-follower (Maryada Purushottama) who maintains stability by strictly adhering to the rules. However, his fixation with rules can dehumanise others and cause them to suffer. The Mahabharata, on the other hand, portrays Krishna as an inventive leader who prioritises talent above lineage and is willing to breach or bend rules in order to attain a bigger righteous goal.

The epics outline four life goals for modern professionals: Dharma (considering others' hunger), Artha (generating wealth through goods and services), Kama (indulging desires with wealth), and Moksha (achieving detachment and generosity). Leadership, in this perspective, is a journey from me (ego) to we (ecosystem), requiring one to overcome the lion within to empower others.

Critical Discontinuity: Academic and Ideological Debates

Being a popular, Devdutt Pattanaik's reinterpretations have faced significant criticism. Scholars like Subhodeep Mukhopadhyay characterize him as a postmodernist who rejects a unifying Indian grand narrative, viewing culture instead as a masala box of incompatible sub-cultures. Academic reviews often point to a flattening of mythological complexity, suggesting that his plain prose and schematic framing may accommodate dominant social values rather than robustly challenging them. (Singh; Oli and Verma 466)

Traditionalist critics, such as Rajiv Malhotra and Nityanand Misra, accuse Devdutt Pattanaik of factual errors in Sanskrit and projecting modern themes such as specific queer identities into ancient texts where the tradition may not suggest such contexts. These critiques highlight a fundamental tension: while Devdutt Pattanaik is praised for democratizing access to mythology for an urban elite, his detractors view his work as a politically motivated campaign that distorts scriptural accuracy to suit postmodern ideologies.

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